The New Coterie

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The New Coterie

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NUMBER ONE - NOVEMBER, 1925

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1,000 *copies for sale.* *This is No.....*

EDITORIAL.

THE following letter appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* for August 6th last :

THE LOVE OF LITERATURE.

[To the Editor of *The Times*.]

Sir,—There is surely a strong element of humbug in the pretension that English people take any practical interest in literature. They are certainly not encouraged by the booksellers to do so. Anyone who suddenly asks for the text of any modern classic will find this out in a moment.

If there is an author who might be expected to rouse perennial curiosity, it is Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have just inquired at the shops of nine leading London booksellers and have failed in every case to discover an edition. The solitary copy these nine great bibliopoles could produce was one in very small type, very bad text, and an enormous price.

The other day I searched the foreign bookshops of London for a Petrarch—the plain text of the sonnets in Italian. In vain ! I then ordered a copy of one of the principal booksellers, and after long delay received the answer that they were " unable to hear of any edition " which they " could supply " !

This experience could be repeated over and over again. The booksellers have no enterprise and no ambition in dealing with any books but those of the moment. Buyers have no pertinacity and no real interest. The whole pretence of a public love of literature is a delusion, and the sooner we recognise it the better.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

EDMUND GOSSE.

We suggest that documents such as this do not often appear in the public press, for Sir Edmund Gosse is hardly the person to send rash letters to a paper, especially when that paper happens to be the *Times Literary Supplement*. It is not for us to say how far Sir Edmund's attack on the booksellers is justified—nor does it really matter. What does concern us is the allegation in the last two sentences : *The whole pretence of a public love of literature is a delusion, and the sooner we recognise it the better.*

* * *

Well, that is plain and emphatic enough. It is also extremely pessimistic, and that is what concerns us. Is Sir Edmund mistaken ? Has he overstated the case ? Before expressing any definite views on the subject, we prefer to wait until *The New Coterie*, like the dove let loose from the ark, has had time to provide us with omens. But, in the meanwhile, we are inclined to fear the worst. For example, it might reasonably have been supposed that Sir Edmund's letter which, in its way was sensational enough, would have produced a brisk interchange of views. If Mr. Hobbs, in a letter to *The Times*, had expressed his opinion that Englishmen did not care a rap about cricket, and that it was idle to pretend they did, we can just barely imagine the terrific uproar which would have resulted. Printing House Square would have been obstructed by shoals of letters from all those portions of the world which are marked red on the maps, and probably from many which are not. Sir Edmund's letter, however, was received by the British Empire with an altogether stoic endurance. Three still, small voices, and three alone, were heard crying in the wilderness, and they were raised merely in a rather half-hearted defence of the booksellers.

* * *

That hardly suggests any appreciable interest in literature, even on the part of those who read the *Times Literary Supplement*, to say nothing of the cruder souls who do not. And then, if we are searching for evidence in this matter, we may as well refer to the present status of literary journals in this country, if indeed the blessed word status can decently be applied to so parlous a thing. It is notorious that no English periodical, devoted entirely to literature, can pay its way. It is notorious, at least, to all who have ever sacrificed their scanty leisure in conducting

such periodicals. That, however, it is not as widely known as it ought to be, would appear from the following letter with which we have been favoured :

" September 7th.

Sir,

I am requested by Miss Edith Sitwell to return the enclosed communication, which was doubtless sent to her by mistake. Writers of Miss Sitwell's standing do not ' submit ' their works for approval, neither, though they are sometimes willing to help undergraduate publications without payment at all, do they accept payment at the rate of five shillings a page. Miss Sitwell asks me to assure you that she does not suspect you of deliberate bad manners ; your mistake is probably the result of lack of experience in dealing with writers of eminence.

Yours faithfully,
M. GROGAN,
(for Miss Sitwell)."

We will make no comment on this letter, except to point out that the circular which evoked it was distributed among a large number of writers and artists of note, with results which appear in the first number of *The New Coterie*.

* * *

" This book—to put it plainly—is a monument of self-consciousness and conceit."

" Twenty years ago this book would have been put into the wastepaper-basket by any educated reader."

" It is the work of an exceedingly crude mind, and it is written in a correspondingly crude manner."

" There are scores of pages of this vague verbiage winding in and out of this jungle of personal pronouns."

" Smug impertinence."

" There are many other dark hints of the kind that impress young visitors to a lunatic-asylum."

" A volume of interminable repetitions."

" Nothing can exceed the airiness with which Mr. Murry reveals his own incompetence."

> " Mr. Murry's tortuous way is high complicated by references to . . . metaphysical works with which Mr. Murry seems to have muddled himself beyond all possibility of salvation."

The above extracts are not, as might be expected, from the *Quarterly Review* of a hundred years ago, but from the *Sunday Times* of October 4th last. The *Sunday Times* of all papers! The notice of Mr. J. Middleton Murry's " Keats and Shakespeare," from which we have quoted some of the more rousing phrases, appeared there under the odd title " Bombinations of a Chimaera." At first we thought that the *Sunday Times* was dismissing the literary lions which purr so nicely in its columns, and replacing them by literary slaters. But a search in the following issue proved disappointing. All was strictly Sabbatarian as before. No new epoch of pugilistic criticism had been inaugurated. The iconoclastic " Bombinations of a Chimaera " were a flash in the pan, an isolated and mysterious outburst of livid fury. For mysterious they certainly are. We must confess that we should like to know the who and wherefore of this unprovoked assault on Mr. Murry's innocuous volume.

* * *

But let us return to literature, and point out that the October number of " Le Navire d'Argent " includes a dozen pages from a new work by James Joyce. An editorial note explains that this extract was offered to " The Calendar of Modern Letters," but that, as the English paper was unable to print it without expurgation, and as Mr. Joyce refused to let it be expurgated, it had to seek French tolerance and hospitality. We have read with some care this refugee effusion, which seems to consist of a washerwoman's meditations, but we have failed to discover anything in it which might not appropriately have appeared in " The Calendar of Modern Letters." Of course, twelve pages of Joyce, while they go a long way, do not provide sufficient material for a definite critical judgment. It would be as easy to draw conclusions about the merits of a picture 20 feet each way, by inspecting a square inch of it snipped off at random. We must therefore be pardoned if we do little more than jot down a few of Mr. Joyce's latest sentences :

" Ah, but she was the queer old skeowsha anyhow, Anna Livia, twinkletoes And sure he was the queer old buntz too, Dear Dirty Dumpling, foostherfather of fingalls and dotthergills."

" Nooknoorum nyroo ! Nooknoorum nyroo ! He erned his lille Bunbath hard, our staly bred, the trader. He did. Look at here."

" Sweet umptyum and nobody fainted. But in whelk of her mouths ? Was her naze alight ? Everyone that saw her said the dowse little delia looked a bit queer. Lotsy trosty, mind the poddle."

" That done, a dawk of smut to her airy ey, and she sent her boudeloire maid to His Affluence with respecks from his missus, seepy and sewery, and a request she might leave him for a minnikin."

" Night now ! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm ! Night night ! Tell me tale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of, Night ! "

It is clear that we can hardly apply to this kind of writing the same standards which would serve us for, say, Mrs. Glyn or Mr. Galsworthy. Moreover, we are not always certain where the labours of Mr. Joyce leave off and those of the French compositor begin. For the time being, however, our criticism must be implied in what we have quoted. What Mr. Joyce has written hitherto—" Dubliners," " The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," " Chamber Music," " Exiles," " Ulysses "—leads us to regard him neither as an immense genius nor as an obscene driveller, and his latest work, in its present state, does not appreciably modify our attitude towards him. But there were moments, we must admit, when the deciphering of this new script was attended with the suspicion of a doubt. Vague misgivings marred our otherwise complete delight. We remembered that Mr. Joyce's works are being translated into French, and an impish idea, which we instantly suppressed, made us wonder if they will all ever be translated into English.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG.

THE EVE OF THE FAIR

(FOLIGNO)

GREEN grows the grass in these well-watered meadows
For here there bubbles from a hundred springs
The bright Clitumnus under dappled shadows
Of slender poplars where the faint breeze sings
And the green-showering tresses of weeping willows :
And all the pool is floored with woven weed
And caverns lined with glimmering mossy pillows
And pale blue rocks. Those bubbling waters feed
Rich farms, half-hidden behind a feathery screen
Of silver olive-boughs and trailing vines
Heavy with clusters purple, red, and green,
Soon to be trodden to red and golden wines.
And, bounding either edge of the green plain,
The violet mountains lift their peaceful crowns,
Soaring like waves crest above crest again,
Still peopled with remote and ancient towns—
Lofty Spoleto with its rocky gorge
Spanned by the aqueduct, and many a keep—
Spello and Montefalco—towns that urge
Stone street and scowling palace up the steep
And set a crown of towers on many hills,
Leaping abrupt and stark against the sky,
And turbid at noon and eve with clanging bells.
From these and all the villages that lie
Scattered upon the plain, the countryfolk
Are flocking towards Foligno for the fair,
Bringing their wares ; with song and curse and joke
They swelter along in the dry and dusty glare.
All day, along the parched and dazzling roads
That straggle to the town from every part,
Oxen and mules and horses draw their loads
In wain and barrow and brightly painted cart ;

While, in the town, all day along the streets
And in that empty space within the walls
Edged with cool-shaded trees and long stone seats
A crowd of busy folk are building stalls ;
Till the place rings with hammering and knocking
And cracking whips and jangling harness-bells
And rumbling wheels of all the traffic flocking
In from the teeming plains and those blue hills.
Still with the growing crowd the din grows louder,
With shouts of drivers, wagons turning, backing,
And stamping hooves that churn the dust to powder,
And sweating men unloading and unpacking,
Spreading the wares about upon the grass
All duly planned like pigmy towns with walls
And lanes and streets to let the buyers pass,
Or carefully disposed upon the stalls ;
And carts and mules come pushing through the throng
Or scarlet wagon like a stranded hulk
That great white oxen slowly haul along
Heaving the yoke with all their noble bulk,
Patient, with branching horns and deep, calm eyes
Like forest pools, and scarlet-tasselled brows.

Evening draws on, but ere the sunset dies
The bells in every tower and belfry rouse
A hum of clanging bronze that builds a dome
Of mellow noise above the din below,
So bright, it seems as if the shining foam
Of dust-motes and the golden evening glow
Were suddenly enchanted into sound.
But when both sound and light from the sky have faded
And colour has faded from all the hills around
And streets and squares are all grown cool and shaded,
Those weary folk make ready for the night.
Some with tarpaulin sheets build bivouacs
Or over the wide wagons stretch them tight
To form a hutch, or spread their rugs and sacks
Under the carts, while every tethered beast
With drooping head crops at the scanty grass.
Then, before rest, they make their evening feast
Grouped about lamps and lanterns, and they pass

The wine-flask, the brown loaf, green honeyed figs,
And marbled mortadella and pale cheese.
Then someone tunes a fiddle and scratches jigs
Or softly from the darkness of the trees
Jingles a mandoline, so sad, so faint,
It sounds as though dead fingers touched the strings;
And laughter comes in gusts and through the quaint
Dark-huddled groups the yellow lamplight flings
Brightness across the corner of a shawl
Or fires a hand or gilds a laughing face
Or, touching a hidden bough, reveals a fall
Of emerald leaves with shadows frail as lace.
Then lamps go out, and laughter dies, and each
Creeps to his bed, and moonlight floods the square
And silence, broken by the lone owl's screech,
While all lie dreaming of to-morrow's fair
Till the delicious coolness of earliest dawning
Sharpens the air and all is fresh and gleaming,
And a chill fragrance steals beneath the awning
Of dewy trees and stirs them from their dreaming.

CLIFFORD BAX.

TWO SONGS.

I.

WE all suppose, when youth is ours
And every branch is thronged with flowers,
That, as the fruit begins to drop,
The world shall wonder at our crop.

Was it the frost? the drought? the soil?
Those baskets hold a meagre spoil
Or, at the best, but half our hope:
And then, if still unwise, we mope.

The wise man, having housed his fruit,
Turns in; unfolds a thicker suit;
Lights the first fire; and gives a toast
To those who'll work when he's a ghost.

II.

The merriest man that I ever did see
Is not thirty-seven but seventy-three;
A Justice of Peace and the Mayor of a city:
And none has more pity for trouble than he.

You need but confront your misfortune or pain
With pluck, and he'll help you again and again;
But if you are doleful he twits you, applying
His maxim—that crying increases the rain.

He's old, you may say, but his winter is bright
With a fire of goodwill that is always alight:
And—trust me—he'll be, at a hundred or after,
A lover of laughter, a champion of right.

KAREL ČAPEK.

THE FATHERS

(*Authorised Translation from the Czech by Paul Selver*).

FROM early morning the square had shone like a hot stone plate beneath the cloudless sky. White gables with arbours, cactuses and geraniums blossoming in the windows, a rust-coloured puppy wriggling on the pavement. The gloomy frontages of the rich houses breathe chillness upon the flame-lit day ; a prosperous dimness gazes from within through the large, dark panes of the closed windows. In front of the apothecary's a St. Bernard is sleeping like a sphinx. This square is quiet, is always quiet ; quiet when it rains, quiet in the noon-tide glare, quiet on Sundays, quiet on week-days. Like a huge and steep-sided ship the church thrusts itself into the centre of the square. That was where the little girl used to walk while she was alive.

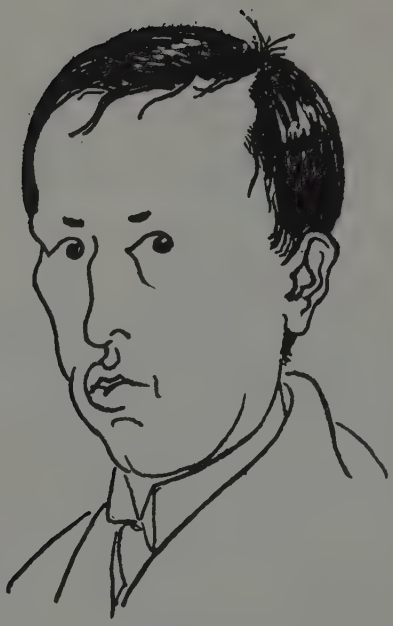
She had died, and never had the small town witnessed greater sorrow than the sorrow of her father had been. During the last days he had not stirred from her bed-side, only when she was asleep did he stand at the window and gaze at the square. That was where he used to walk with her while she was alive, he used to lead her by the hand and talk to her ; the apothecary's St. Bernard always swept the ground with his heavy tail, and stood up so that she could stroke him. The old apothecary reached for a glass jar and gave her a handful of grey cough pastilles. The little girl then spat them out with repugnance, and her poor fingers remained smeared and sticky for a long time afterwards.

That was where he used to walk with her, down hill and as far as the river. She was afraid of certain houses, but she never said why ; she was afraid of people and snappish dogs, wells with buckets, bridges, beggars and horses ; she was afraid of the river and the engines. At every shudder of fear she clutched her father's hand, and he responded with a strong pressure

of protection : Don't be afraid, I am here. That was where he used to go with her for a summer walk, rolling the pine-cones down the slope and forcing himself to be jocular ; the child never asked any questions. Everybody knew them : he, the father, dignified, stout, round-shouldered and solicitous ; she, a badly-dressed little girl of six, with fair hair and thin cheeks. The children shouted after her " Little skinny kid " ; then he turned red, felt unhappy, and went to complain to the parents. Such were their walks.

The St. Bernard stood up and looked around. She had been ill for three weeks and had died. A few beggar-women are already standing before the house of sorrow ; those invited to the funeral assemble, bake for a moment in the heat of the square, and then enter. The music is already waiting, and the ministrants with crosses and lanterns, four workmen from the father's factory in new black clothes, are carrying the bier draped with a long cloth ; the little white-clad girls arrive half embarrassed and half pleased ; the members of the choir are there with music under their arms, tall smiling young ladies, light dresses and wreaths ; gradually the worthies of the town assemble in long black coats and silk skirts, ponderous top hats, dignified and solemn faces ; the whole town has come, because the father possesses property and enjoys esteem there. Last of all, the Rector and two other priests with white cassocks as a sign of heavenly joy. Upstairs in the big drawing-room lies the little girl, a wreath in her blond hair and a broken taper in her wax-like hands.

The square is quiet, and the St. Bernard is lying down with his head lifted towards the hushed house. Then through the open window is borne the priest's loud voice, " *Sit nomen Domini.*" The beggar-women fall on their knees. " *Laudate, pueri, Dominum : laudate nomen Domini.*" The male choir chimes in : " *Sit nomen Domini benedictum.*" The beggar-women in front of the house utter a screeching, muddled prayer, from which bit by bit the words of the paternoster emerge. " *Hic accipiet* " intones the Rector's powerful voice. " *Kyrie eleison.*" " *Christe eleison.*" " *Kyrie eleison. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.*" " *Sed libera nos a malo.*" With upraised tail the St. Bernard scurries off home. " *Oremus.*" The house is quiet, and even the beggar-women have grown mute. Only the fountain gurgles in the middle of the square.



KAREL ČAPEK

(*Self Caricature*).

The little girl died, she was fragile and not even pretty ; she was afraid of the broad square, she was afraid of the big dog and of the fountain, which seemed bottomless to her ; she passed her life guided by her father's hand, she fell ill in his embrace, and now, therefore, praise ye the name of the Lord that she died at the paltry age of six years in order to become an angel.

Across the flame-lit square the black procession advances ; the ministrants with crosses and lanterns, the wailing music, the little girls with a wreath of rosemary and a broken taper on pillows, the priests with burning candles, and then the coffin itself, light for all its splendour, stiff, broad ribbons, wax wreaths and strips of crape, the bowed father, his face as if erased

with grief, the mother, a pale little woman with a black veil, then the people, dark and frowning, with bald heads in the sun, with white pocket-handkerchiefs, a slow and whispering throng, and behind, like a separated and mumbling island, the beggar-women with their endless prayer.

Through the parched hollow road the procession passes to the Calvary of human sorrows. Behind a bare wall lies the new graveyard, white and dry, the sandy domain of the dead, from which nothing grows but white crosses, tin lilies and the gaunt tower of the graveyard chapel. Everything was stripped and bleached like a bone. A white and lifeless noontide. A white, torrid road. The tiny coffin moves up and draws the black crowd after it ; the tiny coffin, the tiny corpse in white garments and with a broken taper ; that was where she used to walk hand in hand with her father.

Poor fellow, he was so fond of her. He married late in life and was looking forward to his first child ; and then, you know, a new choirmaster arrived and turned his wife's head. The whole town knows about it. That's why the blond little girl was born to dark-haired parents ; she took after the organist, the very image of him, she was. It was as if she pointed with her finger to her real father.

The coffin, light as it was, had evidently changed to lead, the bearers halt and set the bier on the ground. Yes, this was just as far as she used to walk with her father ; there they used to sit and look down at the high-road with the carts of the strolling players, the peasants' wagons and the carriages ; from there they looked into the streets and guessed who was coming along that way.

The whole town knew whom his wife was running after, only he was blind ; he had his child, the blond-haired and pallid little girl, whom he fondled while his wife was running about and causing scenes of jealousy with every young lady whom her musician taught to thump the keys. At last he had to leave her for fear of losing all his pupils on her account ; then to everybody who asked for it, he gave her letters to read, and everybody did ask for it.

The music again wails a disjointed march, and amid the pealing of bells the procession laboriously moves upward. The little woman with tightly clenched lips beneath the veil fumbles with the edge of her skirt ; she holds herself erect in order to

evade all those glances, before she shuts herself up at home again with her endless embroidering by the window, pale with loneliness and hatred.

Yes, he had gone from her then, and so she had been left with this child, which had become coldly repugnant to her, and with her husband, who had no thoughts but for this lifeless child which was not his. He clung to it with all his melancholy affection ; and the little town did not even know whether to laugh or whether to pity him, when he took her out, absurdly dressed, pale and bewildered, away from the cold rooms of the house on to the square. At that instant the bells gave a brief peal and stopped.

The tiny coffin is beating at the gate of eternity. It rests on planks above the open grave in the midst of the large, hushed throng ; in the dead silence only the choir rustles with the music, and the Rector slowly turns over the leaves of a little black book. In the crowd a child burst out crying. The gaunt shadow of the tower severs the torrid fallow-land of the dead. It is only a year since they started burying people there ; and perhaps this graveyard is too big, perhaps they will never fill it, perhaps it will never achieve complete growth, perhaps it will have to remain so empty and bare for ages. The crowd breathes heavily with unrest. What is the matter ? Why do they not begin ? The stillness is being prolonged tormentingly, grievously, oppressively.

" *Laudate dominum de coelis, laudate eum in excelsis !* " " *Laudate eum omnes angeli eius,*" chimes the choir, " *laudate eum omnes virtutes eius.*" The assembly took a deep breath. " *Laudate eum sol et luna ; laudate eum stellae et lumen.*" " *Laudate eum coeli coelorum.*" A slight breeze, as if aroused by the chorus of male voices, wafted relief into the pale faces ; a cloudlet of incense arose, the ribbons and wreaths rustled, and from the grave came a chill waft of clay. The father stared fixedly at the tiny coffin, bowed over as if he were about to fall ; the people stand on tiptoe, in order to get a better view ; now, now comes the leave-taking.

" *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*" The young priest swings the censer ; the slender chains rattle faintly, the smoke rises and quivers—" *Oremus.*" The broad, flaming sky is rigidly opened above the white graveyard, a moment of anguished eternity, only the heart beats with the stress of a

terrible, sublime and painful moment. "*Per omnia saecula saeculorum*," "*Amen*." Drops of holy water fall on to the coffin, the father with loud sobs sinks on his knees ; the coffin with a slow movement enters the grave, and the choir chimes in with the sweet, mournful, muffled anthem "God has beckoned."

The little woman in the veil listens as if nailed to the spot. Only too well does she know that rich, glossy, self-satisfied, smug voice. Once she listened to it elsewhere, and glowingly melted at its palpable touch. The whole township listens with bowed head : the choirmaster himself is singing with the leader of the women's choir, Marie, the Venus of the town, a tall girl in full bloom. From the whole choir only these two voices can be heard. It is said that this Marie goes to him. The two voices fondle and embrace each other in the full sunshine ; the Rector himself listens with closed eyes, the little woman bursts into convulsive weeping, the blue cloudlet of incense soars heavenward, and softly, hushedly, the finale rises above the grave. The Rector rouses himself as if from a dream, and bows to the ground. One, two, three clods of earth.

One, two three ; everybody presses forward to the open grave, where the father is kneeling on a knoll of clay and sobbing as if he would never stop. All have flung their three clods into the grave and would like to depart. They are only waiting for the father to stand up, so that they can shake hands with him. The priests fidget with their feet, they have to go back to the chapel ; the gravedigger has blown his nose loudly, and begun to shovel the dry and torrid clay into the grave. The whole assembly maintains an embarrassed and dull silence.

Then a ripple of tickling mirth passes through the choir. The choirmaster is glad that he has brought the joke off, and his eyes sparkle. The pale Anezka has blushed. Matylda bites at her pocket-handkerchief, and Marie is bent by a suppressed outburst. The choirmaster has contentedly run a comb through his moustache and hair, leaned forward to Marie and whispered something to her. Marie has gulped with laughter and escaped. The whole assembly looks round, half smiling and half scandalised.

Suddenly the father gets up, trembles and tries to say something. "To you—to all of you—who showed my only—beloved daughter ——" But he can say no more, he bursts out sobbing, and without shaking hands with anyone, he departs as in a dream. A general feeling of awkwardness ensued. While the

priests enter the chapel, the crowd breaks up and disperses. A few hastily scrawl three crosses on the tombs of their dead, others halt for a moment in front of some gravestone, and scarcely anybody waits till the end of the service ; only the choir-master with Marie and other members of the women's choir amid noisy laughter go to the chancel of the graveyard chapel.

A few women in black are praying by the graves, wipe their eyes and arrange the poor withered flowers.

From the open chapel floats the Rector's chant : " *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino.*"

" *Benedicite angeli Domini Domino,*" chimes in the choir-master.

With copious shovelfuls the gravedigger buries the child of the two fathers.

T. W. EARP.

EPIGRAMS.

A Man of Affairs.

A MERCHANT prince, a monarch of finance,
Great in the Bull-ring, great at baiting Bears,
One day was victim of a slight mischance,
For too elastic were some rubber shares.

His Chiltern Hundreds fifteen thousand cost—
Such men's well-being is the public weal—
His party lost him, and his party lost:
It was a deal, they thought. It *was* a deal.

An Old Song Re-Sung.

SHE was neither poor nor honest,
She was victim of no crimes,
And when she died they gave her
Half-a-column in the *Times*.

Mors et Vita.

FROM the immense inane to the inane immense
The soul flies forth upon the wings of sense,
And after a short while flies back again
From the inane immense to the immense inane.

The Right Hon.

WHERE lovely Paestum fronts the sea
And roses 'mid the temples rise,
The Right Hon. walks in ecstacy,
With rapture in his dreaming eyes.

His lips are moving as in prayer
To see the beauty of the bay,
To breathe the scented southern air,
And you might hear him softly say:

"Ships, Mr. Speaker, ships and guns—
Cold steel—concessions—Soviet—
Oil—Flanders fields—accursed Huns—
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

LOUIS GOLDING.

THE DEAF-MUTE WAITER.

WHO will wear those stolen silks in Castelvetrano and spread those fringed cloths over their tables? Castelvetrano is no frivolous city, but I can quite see why the thieves chose it as their distribution-centre out of all the towns in Italy and Sicily between Genoa and the African sea. Thieves is a hard word, and I do no justice to the gaiety and candour of my companions in the third-class carriage southward from the station of Calatafimi-Alcamo. They were sailors, or at least denizens of the docks if not of the sea, and had rifled a ship in dock at Genoa. They made no bones about it. They had about eight enormous fibre suit-cases and a couple of wooden chests that looked like the tuck-boxes of an English schoolboy. It seemed that they had felt it desirable to wait thirty, forty, fifty hours before they divided the swag in the comfortable contiguity of Castelvetrano. But they discussed their exploit and spread out the silks and folded them again without a trace of embarrassment. They were a fellowship of five, the most attractive of them being a huge round hogshead of a man, the typical bo'sun of comic nautical legend. His face was a peony. You felt that his nose and ears and lips would come off if he shook his head at all violently, as the petals of a full-bloom peony do. I did not like the gentleman among them, who wore a stiff collar, a bowler hat and patent shoes. There was a slight suggestion of reserve in his behaviour, as if he did not believe in the human race with all the full-blooded spontaneity of his companions. It seemed unworthy of the rest of us and of Castelvetrano. The three others were merely nice young men, who had already invested in the pointed shoes of the Sicilian giovanotto on the strength of their profits, but beyond this had not allowed their success to inflate them unduly. They unrolled length upon length of silk-taffeta, shap, shantung, crêpe de Chine, and we were all invited to test its quality by rubbing the

edge between our fingers or tugging at the thread, to see how the warp and woof adhered. But they were even prouder, and more gasps of admiration were wrung from us, at the sight of the brocade tablecloths, fringed, with little tassels hanging from them. In certain lights you saw a presentment of the Pyramids in one, of St. Peter's in another, of what might have been the Albert Memorial in a third. They had æsthetic value, therefore, in addition to the mere worth of their texture. Gradually the whole train filed into our compartment, and expressed its delight, innocently, without rancour. All the train officials were there, with spats on their ankles and braid on their hats. Perhaps they envisioned their little sitting-rooms gladdened by the Albert Memorial, with silk tassels hanging from its base, and the Taj Mahal lying across their beds for a counterpane. Will it be the wives of the station officials in Castelvetrano who will throw those lengths of saffron shantung and apple-green taffeta over their shoulders ?

We steamed into Castelvetrano at length and the happy pilgrims picked up their fibre suit-cases and wooden chests and made off into the town. The disconsolate vendors of chocolate staggered off under the weight of their Gladstone bags laden with unsold logs of petrified alluvial mud. No attention had been paid to them. They had once and again set up their cries of so many bars of chocolate, combined with so many packets of biscuits and so many gold watch-chains and so many diamond rings for so few liras, so pitiably few liras. But no man had paid attention to them. We gazed spellbound upon the silks. There was no distracting us from St. Mark's and the Eiffel Tower.

A little silken ostentation will do no harm in Castelvetrano. It is a dour, drab town. But above all beware the Albergo Rixio. Everything is strange there. A scullery youth led me thither and his eye, closed usually, was yellow tinted. The waiter was a deaf-mute, grotesquely anxious to hold conversation with you. He brushes you affectionately as you pass. You are his, you are handed over to him. He loves you. The more you shudder at his touch, the more solicitous he is. The walls are peeling, everything is evil, saturnine. The hook-nosed brigandry of the proprietor is reassuring. It is the sort of wickedness you are familiar with, you can arm yourself against it. Why does he not dispose of his deaf-mute waiter ? Heaven

knows, if I ever went to Castelvetrano again, the thought of him would compel me to lodge away out of the town in the fields, among the howling dogs. Why does the proprietor not get rid of him? The waiter exercises a curious evil influence even on the proprietor. His dreadfully intelligent finger-tips do not spare him. He loves the proprietor too, as he loves us all. But with a certain air of ownership, spiritual and physical. There is a mystery about the young man's birth. He is the evil passion incarnate of the hook-nosed landlord, pursuing him inexorably till he is dead. The outraged dead woman lives implacably in the child. When his fingers rest on his father's hands or cheeks, it is the dead woman's cold fingers reaching out from the tomb, lest the man forget how much she loves him still, how bitterly she hates him.

The man is a different creature away from the youth's influence, very suave and bad and self-possessed. I went out with him into the town, smoking a clay peasant's pipe—a long wooden stem, a red bowl shut down by a perforated tin cap. A very common pipe it is, no gentleman would smoke it. I saw that he was furious that I was lowering his prestige thus in the eyes of all Castelvetrano. That a client of his illustrious hotel should stoop so low! The tip of his hooked nose grew white with anger. "Are you ashamed," I asked, "to walk with me?"

"Ashamed?" he said. "There is only one thing I would be ashamed to do. To steal."

He spoke with palpable cynicism and level anger. A prognostication of the ingeniously outrageous bill he faced me with later presented itself to me. I anticipated how outrageous it would be, but not how ingenious. No defamation of M. Maeterlinck abated it, nor any enunciation of inscriptions to Garibaldi. Him alone, him unattended, these things might have influenced. But not the affectionate deaf-mute. He loved us all too dearly.

No less malign is all the landscape of Castelvetrano. I went out upon the road to Campobella, through torrid fields of saffron earth, grown over with cactus and thistles and plants all bloody with poisoned berries. Southward was a dim line of sea, easterly a wall of mountains that thrust grimly through red storm-wrack. There was no compassion in any things growing or the air or the hills. A grim land, desperately lonely.

Women may not lay their hands on your forehead in Castelvetrano. There is a little hut among the withered asphodel where you may woo oblivion, but not for long, for they demand payment by the quarter of the hour. And they are hardly women who keep you company; mechanical sexless creatures who, by exaggerating the sole function of sex, have eliminated it. So that, as you wander at dusk through the streets of the town, you stop at the sound of music moaning through half-opened doors, and see dim figures swaying or leaping, but none of them are women. Nothing but surly men and lads dancing resentfully with each other. They grasp each other round the body as if all they desired was to wrench a cartilage or put out a joint. The smaller lads wait on the chairs by the wall till someone condescends to dance with them. There are no women. They are inaccessible in their Saracen immurement behind the dark walls, or too joylessly accessible in the hut among the withered asphodels. Men and lads must dance none the less. It is in their sullen blood. They dance, recoiling from each other. Trickles from the sulphur sunset wind in through the chinks of the doors. Now the sulphur is all molten, it has all flowed away. The sky is empty of it. There are only ragged purple banks, ominous, full of calamity. The men and lads sway and leap to the music. They can hardly see each other now. That is better. They do not show their teeth.

Fascismo is the only circumstance that transcends sex. It is taken as neither obscene nor unsafe for women to manifest themselves under the super-sexual standard of Mussolini. There was a presentation of banners in the piazza, with boys lifting their clubs and crying " Italia ! " and girls in black blouses and white skirts raising their arms in salutation, then joining hands lest male fingers come in between and lie hotly about their wrists. Their teacher shrills louder than them all, " Eja—eja—alala ! " being anxious to show her ungovernable Fascismo. Does not to-day's paper record the fate of a lady of Lombardy who had her hair shorn from her scalp and all her face painted green, because her loyalty to the cause was not too certain ?

But do not think that anywhere in Castelvetrano, even under Mussolini's banner, even in the rooms where the men and lads dance together, anywhere excepting in the tumbled immensity of Selinunte, you can escape the intolerable affection of the

deaf-mute waiter. That was why I fled from that grim monosexual dancing. His breath was on my neck. That was why I reeled shuddering away from the silly pomp of the black shirts and the cudgels. His fingers were in mine, were pursuing their way upward along my wrist. I locked myself in my bedroom. I moved an empty bed against the door and buttressed that with my own bed. But he was in the air I breathed all night, his idiot voice crackled in the noise of the peeling wallpaper. His finger-tips played upon my spine as if it were a reed with holes.

Only in Selinunte could I entomb him, among the colossal tumbled pillars, in that disorder more monstrous than chaos, before the spirit informed it. Only there was texture so impermeable that his infinitely delicate, infinitely odious fingers did not perturb it. Only there was an evil greater than his, the blind evil of insensate accident.

Selinunte seems a ruin of some cyclopean civilisation other than the Greek, hardly the ruin of a civilisation at all. Or if you recall that it is Greek, then you realise as never before out of what giant travailings all that precise harmony arose. Out of what stony convulsions issues the poised daffodil. The more meticulous its proportion, the more moasy are the labours out of which beauty springs. But to what end did beauty spring in Selinunte? The most melancholy ass in all Sicily was braying out of a sharp sea of thistles among the black drums, the blocks of plinth and architrave. Further westward over a white charging sea, sprawled the ruins of the acropolis. With a strange timidity the man who had driven me here hugged my shadow from stone to stone, as if he were afraid to be out of sight of human companionship, for even one moment in these alien ruins, with that melancholy ass braying and the sea furious. As we drove back, I bade him turn round, for a great liner had come into sight on the sea's edge. He stared forward stolidly, ignoring me. Then as we came into sight of Castelvetrano, he hummed a bar or two of a song, dispiritedly. Castelvetrano is no town to inspire a man to lusty singing.

DOUGLAS GOLDRING.

YOU DON'T KNOW MOLLY.

MRS. LIONEL ASKEW looked up from her small rose-wood bureau, glanced through one of the three tall Georgian windows which commanded a view of the drive, to see if her children and their Nannie were returning yet from their afternoon walk, then frowned slightly at the black-and-gilt Louis XIV clock over the chimney-piece and resumed her correspondence. She wore horn-rimmed spectacles when she sat down to write, not because she really needed them, but because she felt that somehow they were in keeping with her assumed rôle, that they were expected of one who organised and directed the activities of the " capable women " in her part of Somerset. Mrs. Askew liked power as a disconsolate charwoman likes gin. The act of dominating or influencing others gave her a warm glow inside, made life worth living. The exercise of power, however petty, had the two-fold effect of filling her with self-satisfaction whilst enabling her to avoid the cold waters of self-examination. The war had, of course, been a godsend. She had " organised " relentlessly. And now, her position in her out-of-the-way corner of the world was, she felt, secure. The vicar's wife was her humble lieutenant, and within a radius of ten miles she felt that she was everywhere respected and admired by her own sex. No wonder that, her day's work for the village being over, she preened herself and purred.

In appearance Molly Askew was a short, almost plump, straw-haired woman who looked her thirty-eight years. Her clothes had the subtle dowdiness of English self-importance, and behind her sprightliness of manner and the occasional wit of her repartee was that heartbreaking, bewildering, unseizable quality of certainty " that I'm right " which for generations has made a particular sort of Englishwoman one of the wonders of the universe.

Molly Askew always *had* been right, and the thing she did was therefore, invariably, the right thing. She had always been right; and she had always dominated the weaker types who occasionally had doubts as to the wisdom or propriety of their actions. Molly had never any doubts about the wisdom or propriety of hers. The eldest of a family of five, three girls and two boys, she had early acquired undisputed sway over her brothers and sisters. She was so "clever," so "learned." To her efficient mental sausage-machine she had fed, with a certain feminist pomposity, the hard-tack of economics, metaphysics, philosophy, history and so forth. She also bullied the arts and sciences. Even before she came down from Newnham she had begun to contribute efficient articles to serious reviews. Thus she early became a legend in a family, one of whose outstanding characteristics was a naïve self-worship. She was considered a match for everything and everybody, the dispenser of all wisdom, the arch-organiser, the social-queen who could take down the bumptious with an acid comment and a clever smile. "Ah," would say her brothers and sisters to their friends, with an esoteric leer of pride, "You don't know Molly!"

A modern psychologist might have diagnosed from the morbid self-esteem of the Burrows family a repressed "inferiority complex," since—to the cold eye of the detached outsider—they did not noticeably differ from any other middle-class family. Mr. Burrows was a stockbroker who had been educated at one of the minor public schools, belonged to the Devonshire Club, and chose to live at Wimbledon. Mrs. Burrows had "caste," that is to say, she was very distantly connected with an impoverished peer, and this, combined with the results of Mr. Burrows' activities on 'Change, enabled the family to figure effectively among the best people in their charming semi-rural district. The eldest boy went, as usual in such families, into the army; the second boy was sent to Oxford; and the girls were suitably brought up to take the place in society which belonged to their mother by birth and to their father—by merit. But reverses of fortune are, alas, too often the fate of our noblest and best. When Mr. Burrows followed his wife into the grave, after consoling himself unwisely for her loss by "recourse to stimulants," the family had to nerve itself to withstand a shock. It was Molly's first real opportunity. At once she assumed

command, took charge, organised. As the result of her exertions, enough was saved from the wreck to enable Molly and Margaret and Jack and little Ursula to live in decency, provided there was proper care and management. Molly saw to the care and management. The family took a small house at Rockstead, a semi-fashionable seaside place in Norfolk, and it was in these circumstances—" reduced," alas, after the splendours of Wimbledon—that their native superiority first emerged in its full perfection. The family was a success at Rockstead from the start. Molly's mask of bonhomie was copied by Margaret, aged eighteen, and even by Ursula, aged fourteen, while Jack was already the instinctive *faux bonhomme*. Their note was affability combined with condescension, and up to a point it went down remarkably well. The girls were asked out everywhere, and their knack of never betraying the fact when they were enjoying themselves enhanced their social prestige. Molly, as the general in command, could not, of course, quite condescend to holiday-making mankind in the way that her sisters did. But blue-eyed Margaret, with her wonderful dark-red hair, had dozens of admirers, and even brown-eyed Ursula always attracted the attention of " the right kind of public schoolboy."

The years went by without any remarkable events, until, when Margaret was twenty-two and Molly twenty-eight, Lionel Askew appeared upon the Burrows' tennis-court, in well-creased white flannels and a college blazer. He appeared there as Margaret's ardent wooer. At that time, well coached by Molly, Margaret was an accomplished coquette, ready to exploit any presentable male who was prepared to spend his surplus pocket-money upon her entertainment. Lionel fell a complete victim—so much so that he became a positive nuisance. Margaret " liked him " ; but as a husband he did not in the least come up to her rather considerable requirements. In her difficulty she consulted Molly. Molly was *too* sweet and sympathetic. " Of course, dear," she said, " if you don't really feel you can ever marry him, you ought to tell him so frankly. It's the kindest thing to do . . . especially as he is really *quite all right*, you know. Poor Lionel, I'm afraid he'll be awfully upset. But it's honestly the only way." Margaret, as usual, took her sister's advice and " poor Lionel " ever so gently, ever so sweetly was made to realise that the hand of the true princess is not for

the aspiring commoner. It *was* a blow for him. Molly, taking counsel with herself, thought it not unbecoming to display a maternal sympathy. After all, he was " county," and though his spiteful old mother lived in the big house, she would die some day. In the meantime, there was the dower-house. Poor Lionel ! After a ten days' visit to Durlstone Park—she was invited there by Lionel's sister, who detested Margaret even more than she detested Molly—it became " poor dear Lionel." Molly never mentioned to herself the blessed word " rebound." What she did say was that of course he and Margaret were obviously quite unsuited to one another. Yes, Lionel would do. And she felt the need now for *more scope*. It was time she married.

Lionel was a little gnome-like man with slant brown eyes and a taste for collecting butterflies—a pottering little man, with a certain deep-seated cunning as his only weapon against the unkind world. Molly never for a moment doubted her ability to keep him in entire subjection. From the first she was " sensible " with him. She treated him with the bluff kindliness that the hard, hygienic housemaster's wife accords the shivering new boy. She was bright and businesslike and ever so gay and jolly. The " bride looked radiant," said the local paper, and Margaret and Ursula were lovely as bridesmaids. An ancient military uncle, brother of the late Mrs. Burrows, was dug ruthlessly from his club and forced to come down and grace the ceremony. Molly got over the honeymoon as quickly as possible and then proceeded to explore her new background. Durlstone House was a pleasant Georgian building, which had been bought by Lionel's grandfather when he acquired the bigger property. It stood about a quarter of a mile from the park gates, and had very beautiful gardens. Molly at once inaugurated " improvements." When they were completed she had two children, first a boy and then a girl. Then she turned her attention to the neighbourhood. She gave " informal talks " on how children should be born, fed, brought up and educated. She addressed assembled mothers ; she impressed herself upon the vicar and the vicar's wife. The neighbourhood loathed her, but was at the same time rather awed. When she grew tired of making capital out of her superior maternity, Molly's lust for power carried her into wider fields. For " the duration " she was, of course, an indomitable war-worker. But when those strenuous

years were over she developed social and political activities. She sat on committees where she could intimidate middle-class doctors' wives and patronise the wives of those tragic and all too common objects of the countryside, the " all-buts." With the county people she had the wit to be wary. She had to know them and to be seen at the necessary garden-parties in order to maintain her prestige over those who were not invited. But she was careful not to run the risks of undue intimacy with people whom she could scarcely hope to humbug. Indeed, some of Lionel's old friends had given her the only moments of uneasiness which she had yet experienced in her triumphal course. But the anxious moments had been very few, and her successes enormously gratifying. And now, see how busy she was ! How much depended upon her ! What would the district do without Mrs. Lionel Askew ?

If it was a tired, it was also a thoroughly contented woman who looked up at the clock from a pile of business correspondence to see if it were tea-time. She had been busy. She hadn't even opened the dull-looking letter from her cousin Mabel which arrived at mid-day. There it was, on the desk, coyly inviting her attention. She took it up and slit the envelope neatly with her paper-knife. Yes, the letter was quite as dull as she expected it would be. But for some reason or other she found herself re-reading the last paragraph. " Lionel seems in great good form. I had no idea he had taken up dancing again. It must be awfully nice for Margaret to have someone to take her about. I always thought she must get moped in that little Chelsea flat of hers. I saw them both at the Challenors' dance on Wednesday. It was a most amusing evening. The Tyrrels were there and quite a number of other people from your part of the world."

A tiny thought came into Molly's head. It wasn't big enough to be called a doubt, or a suspicion--it was just a thought. Of course Lionel had been in love with Margaret years ago, or had fancied himself in love with her. But there hadn't really been anything in it—nothing that could have lasted. Certainly there was never anything on Margaret's side. How foolish ! Her little thought died away in the bigger thought of her chaste, beautiful and charming younger sister—a real Burrows, loyal to the death to her kith and kin. She knew her Margaret all right.

Molly had the forgivable human weakness of suspecting that almost any other woman, however much sought after she might be, would lay hands upon her man if she got half a chance. But her faith in her own sister was complete.

The parlour-maid announced Lady Tyrrel, and a handsome middle-aged woman of the " worldly " type bustled after her into the room, giving Molly just sufficient time to arrange her smile. Lady Tyrrel was an old friend of the Askew family—one of " those old friends." Her interests were in sport, social life, personal politics and the waxing or waning of her husband's income. She had no others. She was extremely sociable, a confirmed gossip and as such the more dangerous because of her entire lack of any real ill-nature. " How are you, Molly ? " she rattled. " I do hope I'm not disturbing you. You work so hard, my dear. I don't know what we should do without you ! What is it now ? The village institute again ? " Molly Askew nodded, and smiled her hard, bright smile. " I'd just finished the last of my letters," she said, " so you couldn't have come at a better time."

Lady Tyrrel lay back in her armchair, crossed her legs and lit a cigarette which she took from a small gold case. Molly didn't smoke, and was known to object to smoking ; but there are limits to the necessity of humouring one's hosts.

" I wonder you don't get bored with Durlstone, Molly," she remarked. " You haven't been away for months. It bucks one up to go up to town now and again. Lionel was positively boisterous last Wednesday night, at the Challenors'. And Margaret, by the way, was looking really wonderful. That girl *has* got good taste in clothes. I know green with her coloured hair is rather obvious, but it was a peculiar shade of green that I've hardly ever seen before, and the frock was absolutely right. I can't think why she doesn't marry."

" Oh, Margaret is hard to please," said Molly, " and I really don't think she has any inclinations whatever towards domesticity. She has made quite a name for herself now with her embroidering, and she is always as busy as she can be. Margaret, after all, has a career."

" Oh, yes, of course," Lady Tyrrel replied. Secretly she thought what an insufferable prig Molly was. " Still, one can have too much domesticity. I personally can't bear more than two months of it without a break."

PASTEL.
WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM "LOVE BOOKS OF OVID."

JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE.

" Oh, I'm always happy here," Molly observed, with exasperating complacency. " You see, I have so many interests in the village to keep me occupied. But Lionel is bothering me to go up and join him, and I expect I shall have to for a week or so." For a moment, she wondered why she was lying. Then, hastily, she assured herself that it was practically the truth. " I find London so restless and distracting," she went on. " Besides, I can't have the children with me there, as there isn't room for them in Margaret's tiny flat, and I hate being separated from them. Oh, here they are, the darlings ! " she cried. They were in the drive, strutting past the long drawing-room windows on either side of their superlative nurse. A few minutes later, Molly rang for them to be brought in. Lady Tyrrel detested these " commonplace little brats," as she called them, but she was glad, nevertheless, to have another opportunity of inspecting them as it would enable her to describe their latest vices at the next house she visited. They appeared in due course and accorded her their well-drilled handshake, first Madeline, then Vincent. Both were intensely clean and consciously good, but there was no denying the healthiness of their appearance ; Molly was undeniably efficient. They were fed on scientific lines ; and in their nursery they played brain-and-character-developing games. Lady Tyrrel stretched out a fat and motherly arm, gathered Madeline on to her lap, gave her a kiss and sang " Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross." Madeline regarded her coldly. " What a fool this woman is," her eyes seemed to say. They were just like Molly's eyes. At three Madeline was the perfect prig in embryo. With a distaste that was barely concealed, Lady Tyrrel deposited " the brat." " Run along now, darlings, and have your teas," cried Molly. " Say good-bye ! " The darlings said good-bye and walked gravely to the door.

" They do you credit, Molly," Lady Tyrrel observed. If there were an ironic inflection in her voice, Molly was not the one to notice it. She merely smiled her smile of controlled self-satisfaction. " I devote nearly all my time to them," she said. " All you can spare from bossing the village and making yourself a curse to all your neighbours," Lady Tyrrel added, silently. Molly exasperated her, and her heart bled for the wretched Lionel, whom she had known from early childhood.

She wondered how they got on together and whether Lionel had enough spirit to resent being pushed about and dusted like a second-best armchair. Some men, of course, enjoyed being treated like vermin, but she did not believe the poor little creature was one of them. And even the most hen-pecked of husbands has a breaking-point somewhere. Well, it was all absorbingly interesting. Lady Tyrrel sat bright-eyed and alert, sniffing the psychological atmosphere of Durlstone House like an experienced social detective. And she smelt trouble.

After the " infliction," as she called her, had departed, Molly Askew returned to her bureau and wrote to her husband. It was a bright, business-like letter, giving him a list of things to order at the Army and Navy Stores. In a postscript she suggested, rather curtly, that he had better bring the articles home in person.

II

Lionel found his wife's letter awaiting him on his return, with Margaret, from a fancy-dress ball at the Savoy Hotel. It was already dawn when they reached the flat, a soft, rosy, magical dawn which made the King's Road, Chelsea, seem a more romantic thoroughfare than any in the world. They were both feeling happy, curiously excited and not particularly tired. It had been a wonderful evening. Margaret had a pleased feeling that she had looked her best, that her frock had been generally admired. As for Lionel, he had been in heaven. The things of which during his years with Molly he had been starved and denied, had all been given to him—sympathy, charm, the delight of the eye, the joy of life! And how exquisite Margaret had looked! What ecstasy it had been to hold her in his arms and to forget everything else in the intoxication of the dance. All the evening he had dreamed forbidden dreams, and forbidden dreams are the sweetest. If only those white arms could be laid tenderly, caressingly around his neck and that dear head be pillowed only once upon his breast! He couldn't help it. After all, he had always loved Margaret since the day he first met her. It wasn't

his fault that Margaret at thirty-two was more dear to him even than she had been as a girl of twenty-two. She was so kind. Sometimes when he was shaving or tying his tie, and looked at himself in the glass, he had a dim realisation of what a pottering little man he was, what an empty, nervous, pathetic little soul. And yet Margaret was able to be good to him, to seem interested in him. She *liked* his collection of butterflies, she really seemed to understand about his postage-stamps. He knew, when he chose to face the truth, that he had only married Molly in order to attach himself permanently to the Burrows family, so that he could have Margaret, if not as a wife, at all events as a sister. He had always been faithful to Margaret, really. But it was only during the past few weeks that his old passion for her had rekindled and burst once more into a flame. How happy he had been during this holiday in London, how incredibly, marvellously happy!

He followed Margaret into the tiny hall of the flat—he was disguised as Robin Hood, in yellow trunk-hose and green-feathered cap—and hummed a waltz tune in his joy. But when Margaret picked up Molly's letter and handed it to him, his singing stopped dead. Margaret went into the sitting-room, lit the gas-burner and busied herself with preparations for making tea. She drew the window-curtains, and the early morning light came eerily into the room and made her look haggard under her paint. "What has Molly said to him?" she wondered, with a catch at the heart. Was it another of her "awful letters"? Why, oh, why, did Molly treat Lionel so shamefully! After all, he was a human being, and her husband! A black hatred of her sister, which her own tortured conscience did not discourage, rose up in her heart and seemed to justify the compassion which she felt for the man whose wife, ten years ago, she might so easily have been. She could not disguise from herself the fact that recently her feeling for Lionel had become warmer. Perhaps it was because she herself had changed so much. A great deal had happened to Margaret during the past year. She had begun, for one thing, to grow up, and that is often a dangerous process for an unmarried woman who has passed the age of thirty. The last of her flirtations, over but a few months back, had turned out badly for herself, though worse for her ultimately rejected lover. She had been disturbed and shaken by it in the

deepest part of her nature, and she was now restless and craving where before she had been so secure. She had fought her emotions all these years, rejected love, run away from it, cheated it. And now she hungered for it.

" She wants me to go back to Durlstone with a cartload of things from the Stores," said Lionel, in a dreary voice, holding Molly's letter in his hands. " I suppose I shall have to go, otherwise she'll come up to London."

Margaret poured the boiling water into the tea-pot before replying. " I suppose you ought to go back, you know," she said at last, " if Molly wants you."

" She *doesn't* want me," Lionel burst out bitterly. " She never *has* wanted me. All she wants is to have me under her eye so that she knows precisely what I'm doing. I leave *her* in peace ; why can't she do the same to me ? "

" I don't think you are quite fair to Molly. After all, she's your wife, my dear, and the mother of your children." Margaret felt a little better after this effort of generosity. But how queer everything seemed. It was half-past four, and there they were, drinking tea in *travesti*, with the unearthly morning light pouring in upon them. She glanced at her face in the glass and hastily made further efforts with her powder-puff. There was a touch of unreality about the whole scene. She felt as if she were an actress stumbling through a difficult part. Or else she was dreaming.

" She has never been a real wife to me, never a friend and companion—as you have been, Margaret." The words, urgent with passion, seemed to burst from Robin Hood's very heart. It couldn't really be Lionel, could it ? Oh, but it was. For he had risen from the sofa and sunk down on the floor at her side, laying his head against her breasts, seeking comfort from contact with her breasts. And now she realised—alas, how late—that that was just what the breast of woman was intended for—to give comfort to children and to men, who are but children grown bigger. " I don't blame Molly," said Lionel in a choking voice. " But I never really loved anyone but you, Margaret, and I never shall." He was shivering with emotion, transfigured. Never in all the long years of their intimacy had Margaret seen him before with the mask lowered. It was a revelation to her to find that he was capable of so much feeling,

and the thought that it was she, her beauty and her charm, which had provoked it filled her with a secret, inadmissible satisfaction. She felt her heart melting within her. She bent down over his head, kissed his hair lightly with her lips and for the moment she was very mother. " My poor boy ! " she crooned. " My poor boy ! "

" Ah, if you only loved me," Lionel groaned. " If you only loved me ! "

Then, before she realised what she was saying, she replied : " It would be better for all of us . . . if I didn't." And no sooner had she uttered the words than she woke up with a start. No, it wasn't either a dream or a play, and she wasn't just a leading actress playing an emotional rôle very prettily. What had she done ! For a few moments Lionel seemed to be struck dumb. Then, when his brain took in the import of her words, he seized her in his arms and covered her with kisses. " Oh, my darling," he cried, " I can't go away from you, I can't go away. Don't send me back to her. Let us begin life again, together . . . " He was in ecstasy, transported—and Margaret felt herself thrilled as she had never been before in all her life. But it was the tribute to herself which thrilled her. She had no passion to be fanned to flame by his desire. The more his control deserted him, the more hers came back. In a few moments she extricated herself from his embrace and moved away. Her sense of duty, her habit of repression and her loyalty reasserted themselves, and she woke with a shock to a realisation of her own folly. Why had she told him that she loved him ? She ought to have known what the word meant, to men. She wasn't inexperienced, in that way. Oh, what a fool she had been, what a wicked fool !

" Lionel, this is madness," she cried. " I can't think what has happened to both of us. Go to bed, my dear, and forget about it." Her bosom quivered under the thin white silk and her blue eyes shone with a curious brightness ; but it was the brightness not of passion but of cerebral excitement. Her cool white arms hung down limply by her side, infinitely alluring. Lionel stumbled towards her, crying her name, but she avoided him. " Oh, if you care for me, dear," she pleaded, " leave me alone now. Can't you see I can't bear it any more ? " She had used the weapon which no lover can resist, and with a half-strangled " Good night " he went out of the room.

III

For the next two days Margaret and Lionel were outwardly " sensible " and subdued, but underneath the surface both were wrought to a high pitch of nervous tension. Lionel wrote to his wife, in answer to her letter, to inform her that for the present he was not returning home.

Margaret's nerves, underneath her mask of self-control, were strung to breaking-point. She did all she could to restore their relationship to its old footing, but finally her compassion for the starved and tortured man whom Molly had so unmercifully exploited all these years got the better of her. She could not bring herself to tell him to go, though his presence under her roof, as a declared lover to whom she could not possibly yield, was almost insupportable.

" When I leave you, Margaret," Lionel said, " it won't be to go back to Durlstone. I can't bear it any more. I shall go to one of the colonies, and Molly can divorce me. Say you will come out to me, dear," he pleaded. Margaret shook her head decisively. " Molly would never divorce you, Lionel. And even if she did I could not live with you in sin." Lionel argued and implored, but he could not shake her from this standpoint.

Four days later, on a Monday morning, another letter arrived from Molly. " I find I shall have to come up to London for a day or two," she wrote. " Will you give Margaret my love and tell her that I expect to arrive at the flat on Tuesday or Wednesday." So Molly was going to take action. There was, to Lionel's apprehensive ear, a note of menace in her words which made him tremble, but nervous as he was of his wife, his hatred of her was stronger still. How would Margaret meet this new situation ? That was the question which tortured him. Margaret was not in when the letter came, and she would not be home until dinner-time. She was busy making arrangements for an exhibition of her embroideries which was to be held in one of the smaller Bond Street galleries in the following month. For hours Lionel tramped up and down the Chelsea Embankment, wondering what Molly would say and do, and

how Margaret would receive her. Whatever happened, he was determined never to go back to Durlstone. He would settle the bulk of his income on Molly and the children. And she could let Durlstone House if she could not face the neighbours. In any case she would be comfortably off. He had a right to seize his chance of happiness. Everybody had that right. If Molly wanted to keep him she ought to have treated him decently. Smothered resentments of years' standing broke through to the surface of his mind. He saw himself as " put upon," exploited, made use of. Now he would be a slave to duty no longer.

When Margaret came back for dinner, he poured out all his pent-up resentment against Molly, his self-pity, his love for herself. Margaret scarcely recognised in this fiery, transfigured male the meek and self-controlled butterfly-hunter which till recently she had always imagined Lionel to be. At moments she almost envied him this capacity for intense emotion. She knew what it was to be seized on by a cold hatred, and she knew that she was capable of tenderness and affection. But this devouring, aching passion—no, she had never felt even the opening stages of it. The capacity for this strange human madness had been omitted from her make-up. She strove to soothe Lionel, to make him see reason. But the fire which she herself had kindled through her own vanity and folly was scorching him. She could not undo what she had done. Finally, she promised that she would stand by him when Molly came. Her heart sank when she thought that she was, at the very least, committed to neutrality. She was terrified, not of Molly, but of the act of disloyalty to one of her own blood. And the Burrows had made such a fetish of family loyalty. What could have come to her, what could have happened ! It was dreadful. Lionel faded out of her thoughts, so much less important was he than the situation which he had created. When she studied herself in the looking-glass that night—her face grey under the rouge—it seemed as if other pairs of eyes were staring back at her besides her own ; the eyes of all the lovers with whom she had flirted and coquetted, of all the men whom she had made wretched during the fifteen years of her womanhood. Well, they were having their revenge now, if they only knew it.

* * *

Molly was nothing if not a tactician. There were two moments of the day when she might reasonably be expected to arrive at the flat. If she caught the morning train from Durlstone, she could be at Chelsea by half-past two. If she came by the afternoon train she could get there at eight o'clock in the evening. Almost invariably, when she came to London, she chose the afternoon train. On this occasion she came by the morning train, lingered in the neighbourhood of Waterloo for a couple of hours, and arrived at Margaret's flat in time for tea, calculating quite rightly that her arrival would be unexpected. Lionel and Margaret were both at home. They were having tea, and were absorbed in the interminable discussion as to how the situation was to be resolved. Margaret had once again definitely told him that, divorce or no divorce, she could never be his, and had begged him to forget what happened on the evening of the Savoy dance. Then Molly's ring came, clear and startling.

Lionel, unsuspecting, went to the front-door of the flat and opened it. In a moment, with white face and blazing eyes, he confronted his wife. Molly's hands were full of the little packages which sensible married women acquire during the first afternoon of a visit to London. She had an air of bustling efficiency. " Here I am," she announced gaily. " How are you, Lionel ? I say, you don't look at all well. Margaret, my child," she cried, bouncing brightly into the sitting-room and printing a kiss upon her sister's ice-cold cheek, " what have you been doing to my man to make him look such a wreck ? "

Margaret did not reply. One of Molly's brown-paper packages fell to the floor. The others she deposited grimly on a table. In the painful silence, Molly looked from her sister to her husband. So a wrestler might glance at his antagonist. Molly did not look formidable ; but looks are proverbially deceptive. Contrasted with Margaret's cool elegance, she was clearly the prose of life. As usual, she was dowdily dressed ; she was beginning to get stout, her nose wanted powdering and the nice healthy complexion of her unalluring cheeks was not improved by the fact that she was hot with walking, and showed it. The silence was unbearable. Margaret was statuesque, immovable, but Lionel was panting audibly with emotional excitement. " Well, you both seem very odd." Molly was the

first to speak. There was now a slight tremor in her voice. There would have been a break in it, but she had courage. " Am I going to be told what all the trouble is ? " she asked.

" You ought to have stayed at Durlstone until I wrote," Lionel almost snarled. His breath came painfully. He wanted to be effective, dramatic, overpowering. But he couldn't. The words simply wouldn't come. " We didn't invite you," he gasped. Then, in a rush, " I never want to see you again." There he stopped, tongue-tied. Molly raised her eyebrows and her lips curled. " Really ? " she observed coolly. She gave her husband one prolonged glance, then shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly and ceased to pay him any attention whatever. After all, Lionel did not matter. She saw the situation in a flash, and turned to face her real antagonist. The sisters looked at one another, and Molly saw that the Margaret of to-day was a different person from the girl she had been accustomed to dominate. Here was a woman almost as hard and unyielding as herself, and one whose attitude was hostile and accusing.

" Well, Margaret," she said, in a voice which it took all her considerable strength of will to render suave and cool, " you are very silent. How much have *you* got to do with all this ? "

" I cannot drive Lionel back to you, if you have made him not want to go," Margaret murmured. Her mouth was dry and she found it difficult to articulate. There were beads of sweat on her forehead, but she faced her sister without flinching, and Molly could feel the sharp impact of a rival will. It acted like a spur.

" Margaret ! " she cried, in a voice that was almost a shriek. " Margaret ! From you ! Oh . . . " Molly knew her sister as few other people knew her, and for over twenty years she had exploited this knowledge for her own purposes. Her skill did not fail her now as, with deliberate intention, she let loose the flood-gates of her emotion. For Molly to cry was an unheard-of thing. But now the tears poured down her cheeks. She seemed to have lost all control, all self-respect. She collapsed on to the floor, a dank huddle of utterly prostrate and dejected womanhood. Almost in a flash, this brisk, overbearing, efficient, patronising, " bossy " young matron, whom no one had ever yet seen at a disadvantage, had caved in completely and abandoned herself to an orgy of primitive grief.

Margaret gave Lionel one brief, agonised and reproachful glance, and in that glance he read his own fate. In another moment she was on her knees by her sister's side, with her arms round her and her lips pressed against her dripping cheeks, while Lionel, kneeling too, played the pitiful rôle of the brutal but repentant husband. "It's all right, dear," she crooned. "It will all be forgotten in a day or two. Lionel doesn't mean it, really. He'll take you back to Durlstone now. You can easily catch the 6.15."

"Never mind, Molly," said Lionel. "I didn't mean to hurt you like this. It's all right. We can catch the 6.15."

He got up and stood gnawing his moustache in impotent rage—rage with himself for being . . . himself. Margaret looked at him and nodded her head in the direction of the door. He knew that she meant that he was to go to his room and pack. As well that as anything else. It was all over, anyway. He slunk out—dismissed. The women had sent him away. That was what women were like!

When he had gone, Molly began to sniff violently as a preparation for pulling herself together. Margaret first lifted her on to the sofa, then got her into her bedroom, and sponged her eyes. Despite the skilful application of Margaret's powder-puff, Molly was still an object to look at by the time the taxi came. In the taxi, Lionel, cursing himself for his instinctive chivalry—or whatever it was—to women, gave her arm a tiny squeeze. She began to whimper again, and he thought, "Oh, God!" Neither spoke.

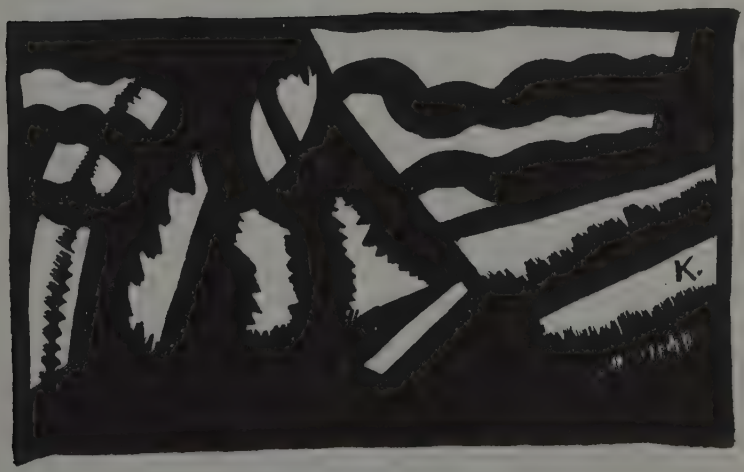
At Waterloo, in rather a matter-of-fact tone of voice, Molly reminded him to wire for the car to meet them at Durlstone. In the train, faint gleams flickered to and fro across her face. Something very like a smile came to her lips. She sighed several times; but they were happy sighs, sighs of relief and of satisfaction. They dined on the train, and Lionel, who was mean whenever he had a chance to be, felt constrained to order a bottle of burgundy. Molly allowed herself to chirp up. Before the meal was over she was chattering to him, telling him all the local news as if nothing had happened. By the time they reached Durlstone, her bursting self-satisfaction could scarcely, even by the exercise of her considerable powers of self-control, be held within reasonable bounds. When the car at last deposited Lionel and herself at her front door, she positively bounced

across the threshold. Her face was shining with her triumph. "Aha, my dear," she whispered to herself, "you don't know Molly!"

* * *

"Let us creep up into the nursery," she cooed into Lionel's ear, "and see if the darlings are asleep." She put on her sweetest and holiest expression. Mother love.

And Lionel followed her up the stairs, his crushed and guilty head sunk between his shoulders.



A DRAWING BY JACOB KRAMER.

RUSSELL GREEN.

PROGRESS.

THE records of the Prophets' Club, that somewhat eccentric but certainly able society of psychic investigators, have hitherto failed to secure the public attention which they deserve. It is indeed curious that, while we compel twelve ordinary citizens to decide whether a man shall be transferred from time into eternity, we refuse to rely on the verdict of any equally fortuitous jury as to whether a man can be transferred from eternity back into time. And yet the momentous moral judgment called for in the one case demands as high qualifications as the purely intellectual judgment called for in the other . . . .

However that may be, it is deplorable that the following recent experiment, with all its vast implications, has not yet been widely discussed. The medium, a Birmingham silversmith named James Albert Cummings, attended at the little-known laboratory of the Club in St. James's Row on the 1st of March, 1925. The hypnotic state was induced by the new Jensen method. Suggestion was then made of the non-reality of time concepts, and a volume of blank pages was placed in the hands of Cummings, who, after considerable fluttering of the pages, at last turned back to what would have been the title page and proceeded, in a faint monotone, to read out the following :— " History of the English Republics, by Otto Trevelyan Macaulay, London, Three MMM's " (Cummings appears to have stumbled over the Roman numerals). He then suddenly turned to a page about half-way through the book and, in the same strange and strangled voice, recited the following extract :—" . . . Many have been the disputes between rival biologists over the theory embodied in the old Latin tag that ' nature does nothing by leaps and bounds.' Its validity as applied to political development is still more dubious, unless its supporters may justly point to the necessity of a slow permeation through the social

mass of ideas of reform, before that reform can be established, as a proof that even a revolution is not a ' leap.'

" However that may be, as we look back from the staid and cultured communism of this thirty-first century upon the turbulent events which marked the second quarter of the twentieth century, we cannot but feel that in those fateful decades the sudden economic enfranchisement of the individual gave to England a convulsive renascence more spectacular than the most imposing upheavals that the world of ' nature ' can exhibit. And this chapter of our present history may well be concluded by the narration of an illuminating incident chronicled in the legal and journalistic records of that period.

" It appears that in 1927, during the last days of the administration of Winston Churchill—perhaps the most unstable advocate of stable government, whose name has been preserved to history only by his accidental success in disguising reaction and opportunism under the solemn, vacuous, but seductive mask of ' Liberal Conservatism '—the commercial caucuses of the country, whose ardent patriotism desired to keep the world safe for unemployed but highly paid directors, succeeded in coercing the government to an unprecedented severity in the suppression of ' sedition,' a term in those days elastic enough to embrace even political criticism. The term was never applied to the coercion exercised on the elected representatives of the people by those omnipotent commercial caucuses, who could undermine the health and wealth of the community by enforcing the decrease of wages and the curtailment of recreative leisure without incurring the least resistance from the governing oligarchy. It was under such provocation that ' sedition ' came to a universal head. The magnitude of Labour representation in the House of Commons, so far from serving as a safety valve, became itself an irritant when the gradual revelation of the impotence of a minority within that House stimulated the demand for action outside it. And one Alfred Clark, speaking for the Communist Party on Parliament Hill on the morning of the first of May, 1927, was arrested and imprisoned for ' sedition.' The term was for twenty years. The ferocity of the sentence made the case of Alfred Clark a test case. Alfred Clark became a national hero. He was the spark which exploded the powder magazine. And the incarceration of Alfred Clark led to the

most dramatic of our many revolutions, which absorbed such infinite energies in such precipitate and universal reconstructions that for a time individualities almost ceased to exist in the triumphant oblivion of a Cause. Indeed, that Cause made every proletarian free but Alfred Clark, who, by an unfortunate oversight, found himself in a Settlement for Irreconcileables in the Scilly Isles, labouring out his allotted term in company with Fascist dukes, the Fleet Street barons, the Council of the Primrose League, the Chief Scout, and the leading spirits of the Federation of British Industries.

"In 1947 Alfred Clark was released. A man of granite principle, he had not changed his revolutionary views by one iota. Now morose and unsociable, he nursed his grievances on his return to the mainland, avoiding conversation and despising newspapers. (These details appear in the evidence of the Security Inspector in the *National Gazette* of September 14th, 1947.) He appears to have proceeded straight to Parliament Hill, doubtless filled with a grim monomaniac resolution to begin his life again at the precise point at which it had been interrupted. Indeed, a comparison of his speeches, as reported in the *National Gazette* mentioned above and in the *Times* of May 10th, 1927, shows that they were almost identical. Nevertheless, on this second occasion it is recorded that he was convicted by a unanimous jury of the crime of 'promoting reaction' and was relegated to the care of the National Bureau of Remedial Education."

At this point the volume of blank pages fell from the hands of Cummings and he slowly returned from the hypnotic state with some irrelevant remarks about silver dust and the complexions of buffer girls. His reading had been carefully transcribed by expert stenographists.

It must be admitted in the first place, even by the most sceptical, that the abundance of circumstantial detail in this apparent history of what we now call the future, strongly supports the theory that we have here an authentic communication from some state of being where temporal and spatial relations, as we assume them to be, do not exist. For the enquiries of the Prophets' Club have established that Cummings confined his newspaper reading to the sporting page, and that he had never been known either to record his vote in any election, whether

parochial, municipal or parliamentary, or to express any political opinion of any kind. The only books found in his house were *Form at a Glance*, *What a Married Man Ought to Know* and *Poultry for Profit* We can thus rule out the possibility of any subconscious fantasia. On the other hand, the inherent improbability of any proletarian revolution among a people of submissive and mystical apathy must be held to discount very gravely the view, proposed by a minority of the Club, that a continuation of present political tendencies would alone suffice to produce the conditions portrayed in the retrospective survey of Mr. Macaulay.

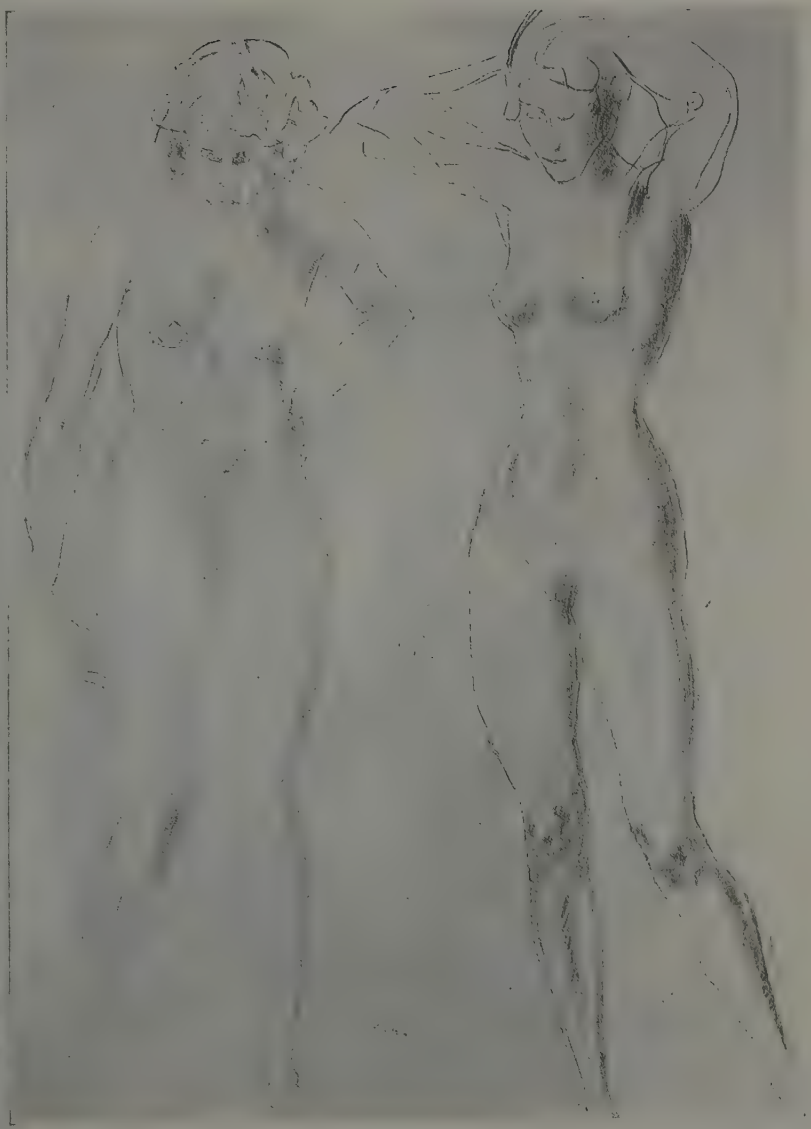
Perhaps the publicity now given to this interesting case may elicit some plausible theory.

OF INCREASING KNOWLEDGE.

ONE hungering cell is strong as Sirius,—
Thus now we boast. O prisoning cell!
The eyes of men from wide horizons turn
To adore the majesty of pettiness,
The worm that dieth not.
Not God but dog now in the manger lies
Adored by gentle shepherds with scalpel and cocaine,
And the old star of the east in nadir mocks.
Far islands like the amber fires of heaven
Heaved on blue seas where night and day were one
And tides knew not the moon
But sang antiphonies of love and death,
Love comforted with apples of the sense,
Death stayed with flagons of oblivion.
The world is too much with us. Keelless seas
(Keats all but said) where the keen ivory prow
Of phantasy's phantom ship moaned through the foam,
A falchion of pure wonder flashing down
Through waters green and black and the spinning sands

Of elfin empires gulfed beyond Atlantis----
Μικρον τιἀλλ' ἐμαυτον ripeness was all :
Rule on thy tiny throne and then begone,
A strutting shadow, but alone and free,
No conscript in the massed battalions
Of equal drudgery. No prying through the slits
Of shuttered windows at the Mystery
With sweeping comet hair whose argent limbs
Bared to the sun on truth's gaunt circus hack
Go galloping through the city of the mind.
O Pegasus, is this thy legacy ?
Art thou returned, shorn of Icarian wings
Melted by fear, to this coprotic stall ?
Thy bandy groom Research sleeks thy once steaming flanks,
Hissing like Eden's snake to comfort thee.
And the great tree of knowledge on Colchis' shore
Beyond Symplegades,
The tree that Time, the sleeping dragon, kept

Smelted its fleece in the gushers of Baku ;
Its warder's teeth sprang up in men at arms
And nations surged to war.
That fleece of disillusion a world too wide
For the shrunk shank of this our seventh age.
Saturnia Regna ! But the wagon-lit
Runs all the way to Ventimiglia
And distance is a bore, who once was Pan.
Παν ἀλιπλαγκτε ! Call the Thunderer
To whiten now in limping Vulcan's forge
His hot bright levin ere the great herd mind
Sink in the quicksands of futility
And ten-valve sets, loudspeaking gramophones,
World cup-ties, sidecars, and Olympic games,
Cricket and International Tattoos,
Goodwood and Lords and the Cesarewitch,
The public schoolboy and the publican,
Trades Union leaders, whippets, tanks and jazz
Usurp the throne of old intelligence !
O Life ! Asphyxiate thy nursery
Ere man, thy senile babe, be choked with toys . . .



PENCIL DRAWING.
AUGUSTUS JOHN.

GERRARD STREET.
PEARL BINDER.

ROBERT McALMON.

THE BULLFIGHT.

PAGEANT of flesh, dung, guts, and blood,
the corrida des toros is on.

There is colour, of gold embroidery,
of bright shawls on ladies
popularly famed as beautiful,
and of shining coiffures, high combs,
mantillas, all in the sun, the dust,
the wind across the sultry daylight.

(They are meat eaters, these Spaniards.
Four courses of meat, not bull meat, to the meal.
They love siestas.
Spain is one European country which retains
its original race quality and a medieval tang.)

For some moments the aged bony horses
prance processionally in the ring. Then they are listless.
And the gate lifts. The bull is slow to enter,
shocked by light so quick with brilliance on darkness.

With a spurt of enraged expectancy he is in the ring,
and stops with a snap, bewildered.
Bright capes and moving figures daze him.
He charges capes that fall to nothing before his violence.
His bronze-glistening bulk of prehistoric nerves
has taken on the lithe agility of a panther.
Dazedly his eye becomes aware of a horse body taunting him.

Warily, like a curious tiger kitten sensing danger
the bull sways hesitatingly, and carefully places one foot
ahead slinking the other foot ahead crouching
and then the springing rush is made, massively relentless.
Kicking and trembling the horse goes over the bull's head,
and falls back, ripped open, spurting blood.
His hind legs jerk with feeble epilepsy as the bull gores him.
A stub of horsetail quivers. Soon he is dead.
Other horses in the ring are trembling.
In a fury the bull charges, and kills three more horses.
He is a good bull.
The torreros seek refuge.
Blood pours with the sunlight over his gold gleaming body.

(The audience, enjoying this show
will not jeer either the bull or the torreros.)

The torrero's turn has come.
With adept manipulation of the cape he leads the bull
to charges, back and forth, a quarter round the ring.
The colour has hypnotized the bull's eye.
He stands heaving breath from his lower nostrils into the dust.
A fog is over his eyes. A whimper is in his challenging bellow.
His shoulders drip blood.

This is a bull. Not a charge has he refused.
He has torn three horses, and killed four more.
At flash moments he has almost known
that men, and not the coloured banners, torment him.
Not at all has the dumb look of puppy terror-wonder asking *why*
come to his face. His expression
is a look of dogged wonder trying to be thought.

The torrero, whose thrusts are butchery, has been tossed.
Blood gushes from badly placed deathstroke in the bull.
Still he fights and charges. His legs weaken.
He staggers and sprawls like a new-born calf.
The charges are feeble, wavering, and heartless.
The toss of his head is a plaint, a " let me alone " protest.

Reluctantly his front legs crumble and fold beneath him.
He slowly lies down, a peaceful cow,
though his head wavers a toss at the approach of a man.
So his head falls to the side. The body rolls over.
It is time for the mule teams and sweepers to clear the ring.
There is a reek of raw flesh and dungish perspiration.
The crowd is happy with excitement.

Over the gold cadaver a hot sun pours light
as it is dragged, sliding bulk, quickly out of the ring,
getting, too late for the bull's appreciation, a grand ovation.
Is there yet defiance on the taut-sinewed hulk?
The ten-minute fight may not have sufficed
to release all of the sullen pent-up resentment
at the dumb prison. Life; and old horses
were not sufficient objective for so dynamic a neck
however well energy broke into a spectacle
where dullness could not be in the hysteria of sadism.

SALVAGE.

I.

MRS. PRIDDEN, hitching up rumpled sheets to cover an exposed and chilly shoulder, was vaguely conscious of the rumble of a passing train and of the distant miauling of a cat. Each sound carried accusation. The train, if stopping at the halt, would be the 11.10, and that was bad enough; if it went on to Saltridge it would be the 12.18, and that would render her despicable. As for the cat, it was one of God's creatures and, though its outcry was abominable, its welfare was her personal concern.

The train did not stop. It was past midday therefore, and Peter's lamentations were a scandal. Anxiety on his account was shot with darker apprehension. Giggles and a confused scuffling became audible in the adjoining room. Curlie, with Gilbert Wilmington, no doubt. When had he come? More pertinently, perhaps, when had he gone last night? What the girl saw in him! Young fool! She'ld have to speak to her—no nonsense. . . . In five more minutes she'ld get up.

As Mrs. Pridden's five minutes lengthened into ten and into twenty, Easy Row, having washed, or left unwashed, its breakfast crockery, began lethargically to take the air. Here and there a rustic gate clicked open. In the next bungalow but one a man in shirt-sleeves ran his mower twice or thrice half-heartedly around his tiny patch of lawn.

Easy Row, indeed, was seldom known to bustle. In Brighton or in Timbuctoo no doubt there were appearances to be kept up but here were none. The tone was laxer far than that of Saltridge three miles farther down the line, for even seaside villas have some noble rigours of their own. At Easy Row, in spite of the

advertisements, there was no sea, nor were there any rigours. It was a soil where virtue deliquesced in freakish sects and vice itself, grown atrophied and feeble, wore a tame-cat air.

From the halt a dusty track ran straight towards the bungalows across an arid stretch of what had once been marsh, now parched and cracking in the sun. This virgin earth extended to the centre of the settlement. Patches of it had been islanded into " gardens," but even there its character prevailed. Ambitious little arbours half completed, gateways and ornamental seats commenced in the first glow of handy-mannery and then abandoned, mourned everywhere the death of enterprise, the speedy sapping of initiative. Eastwards, a line of railway coaches marked slow declension in the social scale. Here were four " Nests," a trinity of " Kia Oras " and two " Shacks." Upon the roof of each a wireless aerial arose ; within for half the day the gramophone would hoarsely drone.

It was from out the westernmost and newest " Kia Ora " that, as a clock within struck one, a sandalled, bare-legged child emerged, supporting in her arms a tub and washing board which had been lent to her by Mrs. Pridden on the previous evening. She approached the door at which the anguished cat still uttered his lament and with the tub gave two loud thumps. Peter, as Curlie opened, bounded in, sprang with a flying leap on Mrs. Pridden's bed, and finally aroused her.

II.

She dressed hurriedly, the lateness of the hour precluding or excusing an elaborate toilet. Dabbing a rapid touch of rouge upon her cheeks and dusting just a hint of Californian poppy behind either ear she gave an anxious sigh. Two years ago she hadn't needed rouge. The simple life as Easy Row could practise it—habitual diet of meringues and fudge—was bad for the complexion.

Vera Pridden was still young, a bobbed and venal thirty-two, but lack of worry and a constant series of late nights had somewhat clouded her vivacity. Curlie, aged twenty, was only her step-daughter. When Mr. Pridden, under circumstances which

had passed from his control, was summarily removed from their society three years ago, the two of them were faced with what might properly be called a " situation." " What about it ? " asked the situation, and " Well, *what* about it ? " Vera had replied, and sparkled. Her best qualities shone forth. She was game and she was plucky. In a way it was delightful. There was the feeling of taking things in hand, of rising to occasions, of making brilliant *coups*. In effect, she had sold her art-needlework shop in Bexhill at a loss, and with the proceeds bought the bungalow, a patent water-softener and a cabinet gramophone. Curlie for a time had knitted jumpers and given dancing lessons, but of late was chiefly occupied in lacquer work and Gilbert Wilmington.

" *Mother !* You getting up ? It's gone half past, and all the last night's supper things to wash—— Oh, here you are . . . "

Mrs. Pridden crossed a narrow passage and entered the room opposite her own.

" Mornin', Vera," said a vacuous, sandy-haired young man who had risen from a sofa at her approach.

" What, *that* still hanging round ! " said Mrs. Pridden, feigning astonishment. " See here, young man—— "

" —— ' said she,' " concluded Curlie. " If you don't like it Ma, get up a little earlier and push it out."

" You meanin' me ? " asked Gilbert. Curlie tittered, but in her laughter was apparent an undercurrent of constraint.

Mrs. Priddén braced herself and spoke. " Yes, you. I understand a joke as well as most. You know I'm not the one to spoil a bit of sport. But when it comes—— "

She faltered, and her faltering undid her. Mr. Wilmington, divining her weakness, made a facetious lunge, imprinted gallantly an airy kiss upon her neck.

" Oh, get away ! " she cried. Try as she would she could not stop herself from giving him a playful smack.

Her opportunity had passed. She knew it and they knew. She felt indignant, flattered, vanquished and consoled. " Oh, well . . . "

The three of them sat down to a scratch meal of force and marmalade. Gilbert put on " The Back Porch," and Peter, scenting milk, performed a caracole.

The thing happened so often that its humiliation could not worry her for long. It was not so much anxiety about the possibility of Curlie's going wrong as wondering contempt with her for choosing to go wrong with *that*. But, anyhow, she'd done her best. They couldn't say she hadn't been a sport. And " being sporty " mattered most of all in Easy Row.

After the meal they braced themselves and faced the odious affairs of bed-making and washing up. That done, they sat awhile upon the tiny square of lawn before the bungalow.

It was a torrid day of August. Out of the corner of her eye Vera could see young Mrs. Heatherfield across the way at work upon her chintzes in the window seat. Three years ago she, too, had been at pains to make her place look " nice." That, and the fabrication of some plausible and pleasing tale that should account for Mr. Pridden's absence satisfactorily had kept her occupied. But not in truth for long. If Vera had philosophised she might have seen in Easy Row a district favourable to the cult of Pomeranians and the decay of character. However, she had never thus philosophised. She had by imperceptible degrees grown supine, indolent and tolerant of almost anything save physical discomfort. " Where was the use ? " indeed.

Even the matter of her step-daughter and Gilbert Wilmington had ceased to worry her acutely. Sporadic stabbings of anxiety, no more. Of course, if Mr. P. had been at home he'd soon have settled that. She smiled. Those had been difficult and dangerous days when he was anywhere about, and yet. . . . They had at any rate been tense and colourful if hardly comfortable.

Her body was, from oversleep, disposed to somnolence, but deep somewhere within her brain there ran an indiscreet, a whispering reminder, " Four o'clock." Half apprehensive was this whisper and half pleasurable. She had that morning been concerned for Curlie, yet now was vaguely conscious of the onward march of matters which would certainly deprive her of the right to that concern. " Four o'clock," but it was actually not yet a quarter to that hour when, at the sudden clicking of the gate, she started from her doze.

" Mr. Elphick ! " exclaimed Curlie in an exaggerated tone of rapture.

A tall, broad-shouldered man in a blue serge suit turned from the path and, beaming, stood before them. His clothes were spruce, perhaps a shade too spruce, and his moustache was heavy, waxed and black. Across his waistcoat ran a massive albert chain of gold, and in his buttonhole he wore a crimson flower. His manner was both hearty and self-confident.

" Well, now," he said in a rich, bantering voice, " it's nice to see you all looking so spry. I've 'ad a tirin' week, but, by the Lord, it's worth it. That's what I said to that fellow in the train. ' I've 'ad a tirin' week,' I says, ' but now for my reward. Girls, *beau*tiful girls. . . . I 'ad to sweat an' slave to fix that little deal,' I says, ' an' this is my reward.' Bert Elphick's not the one to keep 'is pleasures to 'imself. An', *by* the way," Mr. Elphick broke off reproachfully, " I thought I 'eard you call me *Mr.* Elphick."

" I'm sure it's very kind of you to think of us," said Vera with affected coldness. " We're that fed up we don't mind anyone who'll take us out. Not even you. What's it to be ? A bob's worth at the pictures, I suppose."

" *Naughty, naughty*," said Mr. Elphick. " Nothin' so common. Better than that, much better. I got a little plan. Children, you 'op it for a minute. I got a little notion to discuss with Vera . . . "

Curlie and Gilbert disappeared, tittering. Mr. Elphick addressed himself to Mrs. Pridden.

" Let's get inside," he said. " Too 'ot to talk out 'ere."

Vera, glancing at the figures of Curlie and Gilbert down the road, entered with feigned reluctance. They went into the kitchen. " It's cooler here than on the sunny side," said Vera. " I'll make a cup of tea."

" 'Ello, whatever's that ? " asked Mr. Elphick. A large metal bowl was set upon a table near to the gas stove.

" That ? Oh, that's only Curlie's lacquer stuff. Now, what's the little scheme ? "

III.

By the time that Mr. Elphick's little scheme had been unfolded dusk had begun to fall. The " children " had returned but, save for an irreverent hoot or two, had not betrayed their

consciousness of " sportiness " in progress in the kitchen. Having presumably found sustenance in the front room they had gone out again.

" Nice kids," said Mr. Elphick. " Now, if you'd a' said ' No ' an' trod on it, I'd a' pretended we was only goin' to a show in Saltridge."

" I haven't said ' Yes ' yet," said Vera tartly.

Her heart was beating, yet her emotions were not wholly pleasurable. The more immediate implications of the scheme to which assent had been invited included frequent kissing, and, in the abstract, Vera's chief delight was being kissed. However, she was not in love with Mr. Elphick.

" A shame it is," said he. " A girl like you to waste herself on *this*. Besides, it's only for a time, a little 'oliday."

Vera had sat down upon a corner of the kitchen table. Mr. Elphick, leaning against the door jamb, had pulled out a pipe and lit it.

From under lowered lids she looked at him. Her brain was in a whirl. And what would Curlie say ? After her recent warnings *à propos* of Gilbert Wilmington the cynicism of this act would seem too wanton.

" You men," she said indignantly, " you're all the same ! " But Mr. Elphick only puffed and watched.

She glanced about her at the small, untidy kitchen, at dirty plates still piled unwashed upon a tray, at Curlie's ineffective and neglected lacquer-pot. Yes, he was right, it *was* a shame to waste herself. She saw the last three years, their slow stagnation, shiftlessness, vapidity. She was fed up with it. Anything, even Mr. Elphick, would be preferable. She felt resistance weakening, slipping from her, with a sensation as of drowning, but it was lovely so to drown. Her cat-like love of ease, her instinct to be petted, made a fuss of, was too strong. And, after all, it was inevitable. " Oh, well . . . "

She had risen from the table and was walking slowly towards Mr. Elphick when suddenly she halted, stiffening in a curious dismay.

Some years ago Vera had had a tooth extracted with the aid of gas. For a while her mind had floated on an iridescent sea, but, coming to before the tooth was drawn, she had begun to feel at first a vague uneasiness, discomfort then, and finally a pain crescendoing to savage anguish. And the most loathsome

property of that increasing agony had been her utter inability to localise, to bring it into focus, render it articulate. So she now felt.

For several seconds she remained as if transfixed, gazing distractedly upon the wondering Mr. Elphick.

Then, all at once, she realised with a pang of added fear the cause of her alarm. It lay within the pungent clouds that rose from Mr. Elphick's pipe.

"Where did you get that—tobacco?" she asked trembling. "You usedn't to smoke that."

He looked at her amazed. "Why," he replied, "I don't. I don't much care for it. Too strong. I dunno what this is. That man I travelled down with 'anded me a fill of 'is."

They stared blankly at each other. Mr. Elphick had removed the pipe from out his mouth, but still the acrid fumes of Stoveld's Salamander Stingo Spice curled upwards from its bowl. Not for three years had Vera Pridden known that curious reek, but now its perfume rose authentic, unforgettable . . .

As by some sympathetic and magnetic force their eyes turned slowly towards the farthest corner of the room, then halted frozenly.

Curtains of blue cretonne hid from the prying gaze a small recess in which it had been Vera's wont to cast from sight such household litter as could not conveniently be put in place at once or thrown away. Tenuous, but visible distinctly in the air above, there twined a single wreathing coil of smoke. An answering, as it were an echoing, coil to Mr. Elphick's own.

Suddenly a high, bleak laugh was heard. The curtains parted, and Mr. Pridden stepped cynically into view.

It was due to no clumsiness of his, but solely to the fact that Mr. Elphick, ricochetting heavily from the gas stove, had clutched the table cloth, that Curlie's lacquer-pot was overturned and in a moment everything was in a blaze.

IV.

Their exit from that place, though fast enough, was carried out unostentatiously. Curlie, who had appeared suspiciously at hand, assisted her father to carry Mr. Elphick out into the yard,

where, propped against the garden roller, he looked extremely damaged but sagacious.

Sodom and Gomorrah being chiefly built of matchwood and being not yet paid for, there was no reason for supposing that the kitchen tap would put the fire out.

Lot's wife, indeed, looked back, yet not with an unmixed regret. The fire had spread until the lower rooms were all ablaze. It was darkish by now, approaching nine o'clock, and by the dancing flames she saw a crowd was gathering. Upon its outskirts she imagined that she could make out the hovering form of Gilbert. If so, he made no effort to come any nearer.

Before she turned away the wireless pole collapsed with a faint crash that seemed symbolic. Wireless, and lacquer work, she thought, the gramophone and fudge, even her patent water-softener—all had gone. Her brief romance with Mr. Elphick—ended almost ere it had begun. Yet she was not discouraged, or surprised by Mr. Pridden's violence. After his cloistered, meditative life in Pentonville the social standards of a place like Easy Row may well have shocked him.

And for herself, although the unforeseen curtailment of her husband's sentence had no doubt been something of a blow, that blow was salutary. The old accents of his mastery fell sweet upon her ears. Curlie, too, she saw, had a large bruise upon one cheek. This was the Nelson touch. In Mr. Pridden she perceived her liege and lord, in him divined her God. Henceforward would no placid life be hers. The limp amenities of Easy Row were gone for good. She would live perilously, absurdly, but romantically.

So with high hopes, firm-lipped, clear-eyed, they set their faces towards the halt and had the luck to catch the 9.19 to town.

And if, to some, the reclamation of these women seem incredible, there is but one reply.

That was, emphatically, the sort of kidney Mr. Pridden had.

LIAM O'FLAHERTY.

CIVIL WAR.

DAY had dawned. It was the fourth day. Now everything was lost, but they would not surrender. They had crawled on to the roof and they waited for the soldiers to come as soon as it was light. They would be here shortly now. In the distance there was heavy machine-gun fire, and the sky was red in one quarter, not with the dull blaze of the rising summer sun, but with the dark red flare of flames mixed with black smoke, crackling upwards, winding and jumping in ghastly shapes, while timbers fell with monstrous jumbling sounds into the broad street, away to the right; where the Republican headquarters was surrounded and on the point of capture.

Here on the roof of a publichouse, in a narrow slum street, the two men waited, waiting for death. It was terrible.

Four days. How different everything was now. There, round about, stretching away on all sides from the black dusty roof, the multitudinous roofs of the city lay like an uneven plain, silent; a great roof covering a multitude of people that slept. They slept, snoring now in peace because everything was over, the end was in sight and the Republicans were defeated. Four days and the whole surging throng of Republicans, rushing with mad eagerness in their eyes to their posts, were all scattered, jailed, killed, wounded, hiding in the hills.

The two men crouched on the roof, with their pistols in their hands, waiting for the soldiers to come. One of them was Lieutenant Jim Dolan, a slim young man of twenty-two, with his new blue suit, that he had bought specially for the rising, all torn and covered with dirt, his white young face haggard and blotched with terror of death and with want of sleep, a clerk. The other was Quartermaster Tim Murphy, an enormous low-sized workman, with a neck like a bull and a great brown face ending in a square red jaw that stuck out like a broad upward curving claw; little grey eyes hidden in pouched dark flesh and a snub nose; a resolute fanatical gunman; senseless, indomitable.

Murphy lay flat on his stomach with his chest resting against the low gutter of the roof, his head jammed against the chimney stack that rose erect from the corner of the roof, his pistol gripped loosely in his right hand close to his right eye, staring in front of him, waiting with desperate hatred for the first head to show. Thirty rounds left. Then death. All was lost now. There was no further need to live. Death. . . .

Dolan knelt on his right knee, with his buttock on his heel, also grasping his revolver. But the muzzle pointed at the gutter and his teeth chattered. He didn't want to die. The same hatred throbbed in his brain ; hatred of the people who slept ; hatred of the soldiers who were setting the distant street on fire and would come creeping through the houses towards him when the daylight spread. But he didn't want to die. The fear of death made his teeth chatter.

Thinking feverishly . . . he thought of the two corpses on the stairway, his two comrades that had been killed the day before when a passing lorry full of soldiers hurled a bomb. It burst with a deafening crash on the stairs. There were screams. The garrison went into a panic. Three men bolted into the street, with their hands up, and surrendered. He, too, wanted to surrender. But Murphy was by his side at the top-floor window. Murphy fired, once, twice, three times. The three men twirled round and fell in the street. He fired again. Somebody screamed in the lorry and as it whirred away at full speed, a green-clothed body vaulted with curved spine in the middle of it and then fell among the crouching backs of the soldiers, who had fallen prone for shelter.

Now they were alone, the two of them. He was alone with Murphy and he feared him. He was in command, in charge of the post. But this bull-necked fiend was the real commander. There was no command now. They were alone. And Murphy was a devil.

Murphy had turned on him, stuck his pistol into his chest and roared, frothing, into his face : " You bloody well stay with me. D'ye hear, you bastard ? I'm in command and its no surrender."

That was yesterday evening. What a night ! Silence, shots at a distance, rats on the stairs, thinking about his wife,

Murphy prowling about muttering, two drunken men trying to enter the bar for loot, shots, curses, a scramble on to the roof just an hour ago and now . . . waiting for death. No surrender.

Dolan thought of his wife. God! How strange everything was. Was it four days or was it a thousand years? He did not love her now. Not at all. She had disappeared out of his life. There remained only memories of her thin frail hands, her delicate pink cheeks, the fair curls in bunches about her ears, her big pale blue eyes and the absolute impossibility of making her understand anything. He hadn't told her anything. He didn't even send a message, when he rushed out of his office four days ago to take charge of his post. She wouldn't understand . . . anything. He only thought of her, because she represented the world as compared to this wilderness, where he was cut off completely from life, on a roof with a devil.

Why, why could he not scream for help? Why could he not turn his loaded revolver on the broad back of Murphy lying prone beside him and fire, fire, fire with clenched teeth and staring eyes, ferociously, until six bullets had entered the devilish body? Then he would be free. He could rush down the stairs past the . . . No. He could not pass the corpses. God! The corpses on the stairs!

With his teeth chattering he knelt, with a terrible pain in his head and his whole body on fire, every nerve throbbing, his bowels heavy as if they were made of lead and sagging down, so that every moment he seemed to be on the point of going into a frenzied fit, during which, he thought, he would wander away forever through an endless abyss peopled with devils who fired and screamed and cursed, endlessly.

Murphy never moved. His prone body was stiff, with the flesh lying loosely on the rigid bones, like a waiting animal at bay. Light spread, whitening, sparkling, warming the roof. Sounds approached.

At first came the rumble of rubbered wheels and the dull thumping of a motor. Then the rumbling sound stopped with a thud and there was a clatter of feet. Murphy grunted, shifted his elbows and stretched his heels out wide. Turning

his head around slowly, he stared at Dolan. His eyes were bloodshot and almost closed.

"They're coming," he said. "Good-bye. See ye in hell."

The puffed flesh on his cheeks trembled as he laughed silently without opening his mouth. Then he stared for a few more moments at Dolan and turned to his front, grinding his teeth and levelling his Mauser pistol slowly towards the sounds.

Dolan also went rigid. His jaws set. His eyes opened wide, staring senselessly without seeing anything. He stopped thinking. His whole body waited. What?

Trup, trap, trip. They came. They were still invisible. The narrow street curved a hundred yards to the left. They would come around that corner, past a blank wall that faced an inward curving black painted shop front, with J. WALSH, GROCER, painted on it in white. J. WALSH, GROCER, in white letters, brown horse dung dried on the narrow street, and a blank wall. Dolan stared at them, first one, then the other, senselessly.

Suddenly two green clothed men appeared, walking slowly on either side of the street, their rifles at the high port, their caps set rakishly on the sides of their heads, one man chewing a long wisp of white straw, both staring upwards at the windows of the houses. They halted, spoke to another and then one looked behind and twirled his right hand above his head. He paused with his hand raised and then shot it forward and brought it stiffly to his side. Signal. Advance. They marched on. Two more men appeared. Then three more, all marching slowly with their rifles at the high port.

Murphy growled and then his body heaved as he gurgled his laughter silently. They were walking into his trap. He was waiting until they came beneath him, at close range. Then he would fire. . . .

But Dolan. . . . As soon as he saw them, his heart began to beat violently and his brain again began to work. He had no fear of them. He had forgotten that they were enemies, that he had been fighting them for four days. He had ceased to be a revolutionary. He was a prisoner, he thought, at the mercy of

a murderer and madman, and here was hope of delivery. He tried to cry out to them and wave his hands, but somehow, the terrible power of the man beside him clove his tongue to the roof of his mouth and rendered his hands lifeless. He could only shiver and make inarticulate movements with his pallid lips.

They came closer. He could see the buttons on their tunics glimmering and the curious casual expression on their faces, as if they were strolling along carelessly. God! Why could they not know that he was here, in danger of death. Why were they coming like that so carelessly when . . . Hell!

Murphy moved. His right arm stiffened. The squat muzzle of his gun jutted downwards sharply. He was going to fire. Dolan screamed and threw himself on the prone body. With a growl Murphy whirled around, dashing his elbow backwards into Dolan's ribs. Dolan's light frame was hurled backwards with a slithering sound on to the slates of the roof. He fell on his back and slipped sideways into the gutter, with his face upwards, the head bent forward and the eyes staring at Murphy's. Murphy pointed his gun at Dolan's face. "Ha," he said. Then there was a sharp crack. Dolan thought he was dead. But it was Murphy that was hit. His mouth opened wide and he fell backwards for a moment and then turned himself, twisting his body curiously all on the right side. His left side was helpless. There was a bullet in the upper part of his chest beneath the left shoulder. They had fired from the street.

Dolan threw back his head and lay flat. He still thought he was dead. His brain was whirling round and round at an amazing speed. There were revolving red circles before his closed eyes, and the extremities of his limbs seemed to be firmly bound with enormous weights that were dragging him downwards ever so slowly and yet leaving his body on the roof. He waited in terrible silence, hearing nothing.

As soon as the soldiers had fired they ran, taking shelter in a lane, a little way up the street on the left hand side. Murphy had fired blindly, two rounds, but he had hit nobody. The bullets spattered against the edge of the black-fronted shop, making little dull white spots, side by side. Then he waited.

Suddenly there was another crack and Murphy's body shivered. His head bent backwards and he put his right hand

to his throat. He was hit again, in the left shoulder near the neck. Immediately blood spurted out through his blue sweater. His mouth opened, his tongue came out and then his lips closed, gripping the end of his tongue. He closed his left eye, and with an immense effort levelled his gun at a chimney. Silence. Crack, crack, crack. He fired three times, rapidly. There was a yell and a man threw up his hands, curving inwards, with a rifle held slantwise in them. Then he fell forward and lay stretched across the chimney, writhing. Another figure jumped up and tried to drag him off, stooping low. Murphy fired again. The other figure fell back. Was he hit ?

Dr.r.r.r.r. A Lewis gun spattered farther up. A whizzing stream of bullets passed in front of Murphy's face, moving from side to side in the air, as they whizzed, hot near his face. He ducked and lay still. Crack, crack, dr.r.r.r.r. crack. They were all at him, firing from all sides. Pieces of brick from the chimney stack and slivers of the slates from the roof pattered on his back. Still he was unhit, waiting in the gutter.

Waiting he thought of Dolan. He would finish him off now, the traitor. He felt himself getting very weak. Only one side of him was alive. Death was coming rapidly. He would get that bastard though. Slowly he turned his head, brushing his skull against the low wall of the gutter, so as not to raise it against the background of the slates, on which the bullets were pattering. Then he had to bring his right arm around under his elbow and move his right knee up under his hip. He was a long time shuffling and groaning with the terrible pain of his wounds.

Dolan heard him move and started with terror. This movement brought him back to consciousness again, like a man waking suddenly from a nightmare on hearing a noise in his room. He thrust forward his head, opened his eyes and saw Murphy's face, all covered with blood, staring at him ; and the muzzle of Murphy's pistol, veering round. He uttered a scream and planting his elbows under his hips, he jerked backwards along the gutter. Murphy growled and made a sudden movement, raising himself a little to present his pistol and fire at the same moment. But just as he raised himself to fire, his head jerked upwards, the bullet fled from his gun harmlessly into

the air above his head and he fell backwards, banging his skull against the gutter. He had been shot through the brain. He lay perfectly still.

The firing stopped. Soldiers were calling to one another from across the street. Dolan lay perfectly quiet looking at Murphy's body. Would he jump up now and raise his hands above his head? No. As soon as the thought of getting really into contact with the soldiers came into his head, his terror of them came back. He again realised that they were his enemies. A cold perspiration broke out all over his body and he crouched lower on to the roof, trying to push his body in through the slates, to hide himself. Then pressing against the roof, he lay still and shut his eyes.

Silence . . . a long silence. All was still.

Then there were footsteps on the roof behind him. He heard them and jumped up, waving his arms above his head. Then he fell on his knees and bent forward chattering and fluttering his clawing hands.

" Take me out of this. Take me out of this. I didn't fire. I didn't fire. He was mad. My wife, my wife. I declare to God I never fired. Two men on the stairs. Murphy is his name. Take me out of this."

There were two of them there, peering over the ridge of the roof, five feet away from his face. Only their faces, their arms and their rifles were visible. Two cruel, cold faces, staring coldly at him. Gradually he saw the faces growing colder and more cruel, the lips curling into a snarl and the eyes narrowing. Then one man said : " Let's give it to the bastard."

They both fired point blank into his head.

T. F. POWYS.

THE MULLET AND THE SWANS.

A FABLE.

HINTON village expressed its highest respectability in its most harmless resident, and its most harmless resident was Mr. William Mullet.

Mr. Mullet had never become famous in an undertaking out of the common road, but he was famous, and in all kinds of quietness, in all kinds of virtue, he was a set example.

No one at Hinton could ever remember seeing Mr. Mullet converse with a woman upon whose character the least suspicion of untoward doings had ever fallen. Never, never, did the good man go to fairs or vulgar dances, or light-fashioned card-playings. Never had he been seen to enter in under the painted signboard of the village inn upon any summer's evening.

Nothing could have been more proper than Mr. Mullet's home-life ; his life was, indeed, his home.

After she had done the housework so carefully as would beseem the wife of such a husband, Mrs. Mullet would sit beside the window and peep out between her flowering plants at the sinners. She liked to see with her own eyes how different they were ; how different from herself and Mr. Mullet.

Mr. Mullet never even looked for the sinners. He left that part, so expressive of respectability, to his wife. He was retired. The people of Hinton believed that there had once been a time when Mr. Mullet was in business. Undertaking, or even groceries, it was whispered. Some went so far as to say that he had once laboured in both those vocations, most usefully.

Oddly enough Mr. Mullet used to have a queer sort of awe, or even fear of the sinners that Mrs. Mullet, with a kind of religious

desire, was always looking out for. And when she would draw back the curtains to see what was going forward, he, quaintly enough, would say :—

"No dear, please don't do that ; someone might look in ; someone might say something."

Mr. Mullet had exactly the proper manners to deliver up, upon every happening that came to him in the usual daily matters of village life.

He might very well have just been the speaking part of the £3 5s. 6d. a week that his early industry in those useful trades—before mentioned—together with a small fund his father had left him had made him heir to.

He was never too polite ; he was always exactly himself. If any little child who happened to be harmlessly, though a little carelessly, playing with a hoop in the street, let the hoop by any chance encounter Mr. Mullet, that correct gentleman would take the thing up with a smile and a nod and return it to the little boy—as though he were saying that he, too, had been young once. So kind and considerate a person was Mr. Mullet.

It is difficult to believe that such a naughty girl as Betty Payne could have lived at Hinton, and walked in the same street and breathed the same air as Mr. Mullet. One can surely hardly believe that the girl could in such company—for she must have sometimes seen Mr. Mullet— do what people say she used to.

The simple fact that Betty's eyes were so pretty moved John Barrow, the itinerant chapel preacher, to describe her as a burning firebrand of vice, and even to add worse to that by calling her a stinking ditch of evil—the gentleman's own trade of roadsweeper helping him to this last taunt of righteousness.

Between Mr. Barrow and Betty there had ever been an open hostility, dating back to the time when Betty, as a little girl, had called the attention of the passers-by to Mr. Barrow, who, in his worker's clothes, was sweeping a road.

Betty's words—she was young then—"Blest if thik bain't our wold preacher ; 'e be a poor man same as our daddy," awoke so much hatred in the good preacher's heart that never afterwards did he doubt for one moment but that Betty would be damned.

If in the ordinary course of village events, that bring people together at times whether they will or no, Betty would pass accompanied perhaps by young Barrow, the preacher's son, or

by idle Tom Chitty, the drunkard, Mrs. William Mullet would close the shutters—such sinning was too much even for her. She would turn to the fire and warm Mr. Mullet's slippers. . . .

* * *

The easy circumstances of his days led Mr. Mullet on gently.

Then came a day like the others. A winter afternoon and honest Mr. Mullet, walking abroad, gave himself for an hour to the dangers of the Hinton lanes.

The general outlook was as usual; a tile had fallen from Farmer Rogers' barn—that was the only sign that queer things were moving. Other matters were as they generally used to be.

Little Tommy Mullen was playing in the mud with his stockings hanging over his boots. Tommy was in very happy spirits, because he had just made twenty-four holes with a rusty hat pin in the Rector's new bicycle wheels. Tommy had immensely enjoyed the sound of the escaping air.

Mr. Mullet nodded to Tommy.

Mrs. Rogers was coming down from the farm. She looked decked out and feathered, as was proper for a lady to be at that hour in the afternoon.

Mr. Mullet took off his hat, and talked about the flowers that his wife grew in the little glass-house at the back of his residence.

Mrs. Rogers went her way smiling; she liked Mr. Mullet.

The Rector passed by, leading his bicycle. He would have liked to have spoken to Mrs. Rogers, too, but he felt how necessary it was to get his bicycle into his own garden. He had ridden down the hill so gaily, and had only left his bicycle for a moment in the village, and now he was forced to walk up the hill again and miss Mrs. Rogers.

Mr. Mullet said "Good afternoon."

Mr. Mullet walked on, he passed the tall ash-tree at the corner of the Hinton churchyard. He took the lane to the right and at length reached Tom Chitty's cottage.

Mrs. Chitty was drawing some water from the well in the lane. Mr. Mullet remarked that he had seen in the paper that the glass was going down. It was not proper to say more, because Mrs. Chitty had been pointed out to him as a sinner.

On his way home to the village Mr. Mullet met Joe Banting, the carpenter. The retired undertaker loved to be polite, and

so he praised the new village stile ; he referred more especially to the steps, he said " that were so easy to climb."

Never had an afternoon walk appeared more peaceful or more harmless to Mr. Mullet. Virtue herself seemed to hang over Hinton village that winter's day.

* * *

Mr. Mullet reached the rising ground that is near to the Hinton churchyard, and there he stopped.

He did not know why, but he trembled and looked up. He tried to think ; he tried to remember where he was, but his thoughts were odd, too.

Mr. Mullet could only see Betty walking, walking with a young man through some long rushes, and he began to wonder about Betty.

Mr. Mullet still looked up. He felt that he had never gone so far away from the earth or so far towards the sky. He appeared to be held up by some unknown and terrible force.

He wondered about it ; he began to fancy that the force was a strange new sound that he heard in the distance. The village had become silent ; there was no one to be seen. But in the sound that he heard Mr. Mullet was aware of the feet of a girl coming to him. The sound changed ; it became a bright and dazzling light and then the girl again.

Mr. Mullet had an odd feeling that all things were melting away into the strange sound that he heard—the sound of wings. And while he looked up there passed over Hinton village two splendid swans. The strange sound was come and gone, and Mr. Mullet was left with a vision in his mind. He, too, was winged. He would seek for Betty. He loved her more than life. The evening was darkening, he would find Betty.

* * *

The kettle sang merrily at home and Mrs. Mullet watched at her window for the sinners.

Two figures were lurking under the shadow of Farmer Rogers' barn. One was Betty and the other a man she seemed to know, and yet she was not sure. Who was he ? she wondered.

Her husband had taken rather a long walk. Perhaps he had gone to tea with Farmer Rogers. Yes, that was it—talking about the new clergyman, a harmless subject. They would all meet in heaven, no doubt, so why not on earth ?

Poor Mrs. Mullet ! She cautiously moved his slippers a little nearer to the fire.

H. F. RUBINSTEIN.

"REVANCHE"—A MYSTERY.*

THE Time is the Past; the Place not so distant.

The opening of Beethoven's Sonata ***Pathétique*** is heard from a piano behind the scenes. After a few bars

THE CURTAIN RISES

to reveal dimly, through the twilight of a late autumn afternoon, a small apartment, in one corner of which, upon a dilapidated mattress, lies a woman, her features mercifully all but obscured.

There are a couple of broken chairs, the remains of a cupboard, and a collection of tattered books heaped up against the back wall. The room is otherwise bare of furniture.

The piano from the neighbouring apartment raises its tiny protest, to be punctuated presently by a short outburst of rifle fire from a street in the vicinage.

The woman stirs a little, muttering a curse.

Presently the door opens, and an elderly German, raggedly clothed, with long unkempt hair and beard, shambles in, trembling violently. He carries a small loaf of bread, and an empty bottle.

He makes an effort to steady himself, but it is some little time before he can trust himself to speak.

The Man (Approaching the woman) Rosa.

Rosa (Tonelessly) So you're back again.

The Man (With a painful attempt at normal speech) I got some bread.

Rosa And the beer?

The Man (Tremulously) I thought it more prudent to come straight home. There was firing . . .

Rosa Who's afraid of a little firing these days? You're a nice father!

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The Man (Quailing) I could go out again later, when things are a bit quieter perhaps.

Rosa It'll go on all night now. . . . It wouldn't have taken you a minute ; just round the corner.

The Man Most of the disturbance seemed to be coming from there.

Rosa Did you see anything ?

The Man They were chasing some men down by the market : separatists or communists, I couldn't make out which.

Rosa Does it matter which ? . . . Did you see anyone hit ?

The Man I didn't look.

Rosa There might have been a Frenchman.

The Man Would that have made any difference ?

(About this point the Music ceases.)

Rosa Anyone would think you had no feeling ! . . . Give us something to eat.

(THE MAN moves to the cupboard, whence he extracts a dish with the remains of a pie, and a knife ; he brings these, with the bread, to his daughter, who looks up sharply, as she takes them from him.)

Rosa What have you had to-day ?

The Man They gave me . . . something . . . at the cafe.

Rosa *Gave ?* . . . What are they giving ?

The Man (Revolting at the recollection) Oh, it doesn't matter . . .

Rosa (Laughs harshly) Domestic habits of Otto Fleissig, Professor of Aesthetics and Philology at the University of—

(He makes a gesture.)

Well, aren't you all that—and a good bit more ?

Otto I am a man.

Rosa (Relapsing into her old lifeless tones) An animal. We're all animals—filthy, smelly creatures, with vicious instincts . . . and brains to help us exercise them ! . . . And don't they put us through it for our sins ! You men are lucky : your bodies don't rack and mock you like ours. You are privileged animals !

Otto (Bowing his head) Privileged.

Rosa Animals—animals, just the same: dependent on food and drink, for all your airs and vanities! Doesn't hunger madden you like any cur?

Otto There are other hungers, Rosa.

Rosa Love, eh? Fornication! Don't I know that! . . . Wait till the cold comes. Fine romantic figures our local Tristans and Isoldes will cut this winter!
(She burlesques in a cracked voice) "*O sink, hernieder, Nacht der Liebe!*"

Otto (Crying out) Stop that, for God's sake! Don't remind me, Rosa . . . (He breaks down) It seems so long since I heard an opera . . . and now the piano's gone . . . (fiercely) Do you think I'd have parted with it—for myself . . . if I'd been a hundred times starving!

Rosa (Peevishly) Must you shout so? My nerves . . .

Otto I'm sorry.

Rosa If you'd had any real consideration for me you'd have gone for that beer. You could get it now, if it comes to that. . . .
(A pause.)
Everything's quiet.

Otto It's nearly dark. . . . I'm nervous . . .
(She laughs.)
Three people were shot by accident last night.

Rosa Out of how many thousands!

Otto I daren't take risks.

Rosa Since when has your life become so valuable?

Otto (Quietly) Since the prospect of another life depending on it has given it a value . . . at least a possible value.

Rosa (After a sobered pause) Funny I should need to be reminded of it, isn't it? . . . I suppose a grandfather *is* better than nobody at all.

Otto If I hadn't felt that, Rosa, I think I should have ended it all, weeks, months ago. I have been pretty near ending it, believe me! But not now.

Rosa So it's not for *my* sake? . . . Oh well, I haven't

been exactly dependent on you, have I . . . before this happened ?

(He buries his face in his hands.)

But I was always one for a free life . . . and I didn't manage so badly, considering . . . I got enough to eat . . . plenty to drink . . . such amusements as are provided in these parts ! . . . (another harsh laugh) The gay life ! . . . While it lasted. . . . A pretty independent condition I'm in now, aren't I ? . . . Just an animal ! Perhaps a stage lower : probably an animal in my condition would be able at least to identify . . . the animal responsible for it. I don't suppose I'd remember having seen him before ! . . . It serves me damned well right, if that's any consolation. . . . What I'd really like to know is, whether I'd have gone the same way, if there'd never been a . . . " peace."

Otto God knows you wouldn't . . .

Rosa Does he ? . . . I'm not so sure. I go over and over it in my mind . . . I was always selfish.

Otto All young people are selfish.

Rosa Not like me. There was the Devil in me before—oh, long before—Hell and its ten thousand Devils were let loose on us.

Otto There are evil potentialities in everyone.

Rosa (Musing) Perhaps if I'd married . . . but I wasn't old enough before the war—and after that, without a dowry—what man would have been such a fool . . . of the men that are left ! Marriage couldn't have saved me . . . Perhaps if I'd been more accustomed to—destitution . . . What does it matter, anyway ? A lot it would have profited me to have kept my precious virtue ! It's all . . . meaningless.

Otto Nothing is meaningless.

Rosa Yes. Say it often enough and you'll come to believe it ! Can you tell me where's the meaning —except Devil's meaning—in causing children to be born into this arena ? Suppose I'm only

getting my deserts—suppose I'm worse than women of my kind in other countries: what's an unborn baby done? . . . Or *you*, if it comes to that: what have *you* done? You've only lived for others.

(As he protests.)

Oh, let me say something decent about you for once. I'll be nagging and blackguarding you again in a minute . . . I do sicken of it sometimes . . . only the other sickness is so much deeper. I expect you understand. . . .

Otto You *know*, my Rosa.

Rosa Why should you ever have had a daughter like me? I've brought you nothing but suffering.

Otto Perhaps I have sins to expiate.

Rosa *You?* You couldn't do a mean thing if you tried. You're all conscience.

Otto What *is* conscience? How does it come to us? Where do our souls come from? What do we know about ourselves? Why should we expect to see the meaning of life, when we don't know the nature of it?

Rosa (Accusing) Who taught me to believe in a God of Justice?

Otto I believe.

Rosa (Shrilly) *You?* You—whom they've brought to this? Justice! (She bursts into hideous laughter.) You were responsible for the war, perhaps! Is that it? . . . God! If I thought there were a God . . .

Otto Don't! Don't think!

Rosa What else am I to do—while I'm waiting? Ha! they tell expectant mothers, don't they, to concentrate on objects of beauty, that their children may be beautiful! . . . A monster I shall give birth to! A generation of monsters we Germans will present to the world! That'll be justice of a sort, eh? Justice on some of us . . . (She exhausts herself over another peal of laughter.) Be an angel and fetch me that beer, won't you? I'm dying for a drop.

Otto Don't press me, Rosa, please.

Rosa It's too much trouble—that's the truth of the matter, I suppose.

Otto You know it isn't.

Rosa What do I know? It's easy enough to find excuses. I shouldn't wonder if you'd lost the money—been robbed—or perhaps spent it on yourself. . . .

Otto See, here is the money. (He shows it her.)

Rosa Why won't you go then? There hasn't been a sound since you came in. It'll be too late in a minute.

Otto Rosa!

Rosa Coward!

Otto My dear—

Rosa None of that! If you can't do a little thing like that for me—

Otto (Beginning to weaken) Don't tempt me . . .

Rosa Tempt you!

Otto If you knew how it draws me . . . the sound of firing. Such an easy way—to court death—without effort, without willing it . . . (desperately) And yet, aren't I willing it all the time? . . . Don't drive me to it, Rosa! . . . Think of the child—the child.

Rosa What sort of child will there be to think of, with its mother half-perishing for want of a little nourishment! . . . I've no patience with you and your morbid fancies. You simply pander to them—that's the way people go mad!

Otto Maybe I'm going mad.

Rosa I shouldn't wonder. You'd much better get killed and done with it . . .

(A pause.)

Oh, why don't you go? Do you think I like to hear myself saying things like that? I shall say worse things presently!

(The piano is heard intoning the second—slow—movement of the *Pathétique*.

The MAN hesitates, then as though resigning himself to the guidance of some

unseen influence, rises to his feet. He stands erect for a moment, then takes his hat, fetches the bottle, moves to the door, stops, again appears to falter, turns, goes over to the WOMAN, embraces her tenderly, after some little resistance on her part, then silently, resolutely, goes out of the room into the street.

The unseen pianist plays on . . .)

Rosa (Suddenly, screaming) Father! Father! God in Heaven! Father!

(The SCENE is blotted out.

The melody, seemingly transferred to another piano, proceeds without intermission.

* * *

As it reaches the final repetition of the main theme, the darkness lifts to disclose a bright, luxuriously-appointed dining-room. At the table, from which all but coffee and liqueurs have been removed, are seated two men, father and son, ostensibly French.

The FATHER, white-haired, with pointed beard, sits at the head of the table, facing a door leading to another room, his chair slightly tilted away towards a cheerful blazing fire.

The SON, a fine manly type, is seated at his right hand.

There is a constrained silence. Then the SON drains his liqueur glass, rises, and crosses over to the fire, the FATHER making way for him without taking further notice.

As the Music comes to an end, the silence becomes intolerable, and the SON braces himself to break it.)

The Son Father.

The Father (Without raising his head) Well?

The Son I must speak. Things can't go on like this. After all, we are your guests . . . to make no nearer claim! It is too late for us now to make other arrangements—

The Father (With quiet deliberation) I am aware of that, my dear André, or you may be sure my initiative would not have been wanting . . .

André (Bluntly, facing him) You mean you would have turned us out? Good Heavens! And all because for a moment, under most trying circumstances, Alice forgot herself . . .

The Father (Ironical) Forgot herself? Remembered herself, you mean, do you not?

André If you prefer it.

The Father I confess I prefer—honesty to dishonesty.

André Father! Be reasonable! At least put yourself in my place. What am I to do? The situation is simply unbearable. Surely you must see that.

The Father Surely you might have *foreseen* the situation?

André To be perfectly frank I was opposed to our accepting your invitation. I *did* foresee the possibility of . . . unpleasantness. It was Alice who persuaded me that, at a time like this, family ties . . . ordinary human obligations . . . should take precedence of . . . political differences.

The Father (Laughing) Your estimable foreign wife is true to her breed. It is a noted characteristic of our late Allies to put economic considerations—very skilfully camouflaged—before questions of—shall we say, mere honour.

André Father! I must ask you to respect my wife.

The Father (Evenly) You will ask it in vain, my good André! Let us be perfectly clear as to our relations. You have chosen to avail yourself of an offer I made at a time when certain obstacles were hardly contemplated—an offer to place my establishment at your disposal, for the purposes of an event which I then believed would afford me no little gratification. The engagement shall hold. Your Alice shall be permitted the free use of my house

and its perquisites—even to the extent of playing upon my piano music that another might have the tact to apprehend was distasteful to me—

(ANDRÉ gives vent to an exclamation of amazement. He proceeds unperturbed.)

I impose a single condition : that upon the day when she is pronounced in a fit state to be moved, she shall leave my house with expedition and without ceremony. For myself, I will neither respect her nor speak with her.

André (Controlling himself with some difficulty) Since you have thought fit to raise the question of tact, may I ask, Father, if you think it was quite tactful of you, quite delicate in all the circumstances, to address to Alice that remark about German babies which was the occasion of her giving offence ?

(His Father purses his lips.)

I will say nothing of your repeated attempts throughout the week to draw her into a controversy. Or rather I will say that, having your victims secured at a double disadvantage, as enjoying your hospitality and as knowing that you were under doctor's orders to be humoured, it was neither considerate nor fair of you to taunt and provoke us on every possible pretext. . . .

The Father " Us " ? Did that little word escape you, André ? Am I to infer that you associate yourself—— ?

André With my wife ? Yes.

The Father With her views ? (As he hesitates) Since you affect such deference to my doctor's orders, I ought perhaps to apprize you that my present state of health renders any regard for them superfluous.

André Very well, then. Alice's views are my views.

The Father (With elaborate nonchalance) An amiable traitor.

André It is useless to ask for tolerance ?

The Father For the enemies of my country ?

André For your son !

The Father Pardon me. You would hardly claim to be the

son of Gaston Brignac, a Frenchman, a Deputy, a patriot ?

André *I* am a patriot. Rightly or wrongly, it is of my country's honour that I am most sensible at this moment when I declare myself opposed to all you stand for.

(GASTON gives a contemptuous laugh.)

You don't know, Father, how I have been bursting to make my protest to you. If only Alice hadn't pleaded so piteously . . . but now you have forced it on me, as on her. I must tell you that Alice has been receiving newspapers from England—

Gaston Filled with lies !

André They are not the papers that publish lies. They publish reports from the occupied territories—reports of horrors for which our Government—and our Government alone, is responsible. They make me ashamed . . . ashamed to be a Frenchman.

Gaston (Almost coolly) You are not a Frenchman.

André Anatole France—is he not a Frenchman ? Was Rousseau not a Frenchman ? May not a Frenchman retain some shreds of idealism, sense of fair play, belief in common humanity ?

Gaston (Smiling) So this is the sort of thing they retail to you in the English papers ? Simpleton ! A Frenchman would know our old enemies better ! It has not dawned on you that England's solicitude for those who so lately ravaged and pillaged *our* country may not be entirely disinterested ? Do you suppose, if her commercial interests were not involved, she would care two sous for your fair play, common humanity, and the rest of it ?

André I am not concerned with England's attitude. It is enough for me that our attitude is not right.

Gaston Right ? You mean legal ?

André I mean right.

Gaston (With a sneer) Ah, in the sight of God, as they say ?

André That is what I mean.

Gaston So you have become a believer ?

André Do you, Father, believe in nothing ?

Gaston I believe in common-sense, as you English call it.

André (Ignoring the taunt) And brute force ?

Gaston Oh, is not our force civilised enough for you ?

André Civilised ? You forget I fought in the war.

Gaston How easily you cause me to forget it, my poor André. Assuredly you will not require to be reminded of a previous war in which I played my humble part ?

André (Heatedly) And I tell you there will be a future war, in which I—or my children——

Gaston Not if our Government has its way.

André Not if we exterminate sixty million people, is that what you mean ? Is that the objective of your common-sense, the subtle scheme devised by a brilliant statecraft for the security of our posterity ?

Gaston You have a certain gift for imaginative hyperbole, my late son. Hardly a qualification for practical politics, I fear.

André I know nothing about politics.

Gaston You take the words out of my mouth !

André I know something about human nature—my fellow men. . . . Perhaps through that very gift of imagination—in which you are lacking. I can imagine what it feels like to be a German these days.

Gaston (Urbanely) I protest I have imagination enough for that : indeed, if you will believe me, it is with no little satisfaction that I suffer my imagination to dwell in that quarter.

André Are you serious, Father ? Is it possible for a crude tribal hate to take possession of a cultivated modern Western European ? Hate, ruthless, undiscriminating, of a whole people—men, women, children ? No, it cannot be just hatred. . . . Fear, partly, perhaps. One may fear a whole people. But why then proceed to humiliate them, to goad them to the very desperation that may give you cause to fear ? Have we been

driven mad by fear? Are we governed by maniacs? But there's a streak of meanness in it too—the mean rage of a creditor who flies at the throat of the man he's bankrupted to no purpose!

(His father has risen, livid with fury, but now sinks back into his chair.)

André Father! I have said too much? You are ill?

Gaston (Breathing hard) I am—not well enough—to—to—

André To kill me? Is that what I read in your eyes?

Gaston (Explicitly) Take care!

André Yes, you are ill, Father. . . . Is it symptomatic, I wonder . . .? Do they not tell you, the doctors, that excitement is bad for you? Hate is the excitement they fear. It is bad for your heart—it is death: in your medicine, as in my religion. . . . Why, your very face shows deathly, when you give vent to the poisonous passion. . . . Do *you* take care, Father—for yourself, if not for others!

(In his earnestness he fails to perceive that his words are but adding fuel to the fire. GASTON, beside himself with rage, is only constrained from a furious outburst by the appearance in the doorway of ANDRÉ'S WIFE.

Little more than a girl, fair-haired, of a grave beauty, intensified by her approaching maternity, SHE stands leaning against the doorpost, looking anxiously from one to the other, vaguely sensing the "electricity" in the atmosphere.)

Alice (Timidly) André.

André (Turning at her voice and hurrying to her) Dearest . . .

Alice Your father . . .? He is in pain? I will fetch Nurse—— (She turns to go).

Gaston (To his son, peremptorily) Stop her.

Alice (Starting at his tone) Father!

(HE avoids her gaze.)

(SHE turns to her husband.)

André, you have been quarrelling ?

(HE does not answer.)

On *my* account ?

André (Drawing himself up) On my own.

Alice (Faltering) You have told him . . . ?

André It was right to tell him.

Alice (Woefully) It was wrong: it has widened the breach . . .

André It was inevitable. Don't you see that now ? If only you'd listened to me.

Alice If only I'd had more self-control . . . I shall never forgive myself !

André *You* ? You've been an angel . . .

Alice (Thinking aloud) We must patch it up somehow ! (Turning impulsively to GASTON) Only tell me what to do !

(HE continues to ignore her.)

André He will not speak to you.

Alice (Appalled) He can't mean that ! (She appeals to him.) Father ! You wouldn't hurt me so ? Just now ? . . . (She goes over to him) . . . I was over-hasty. I misunderstood you. I'm ignorant. . . . You love your country: love: that suffices . . . I only want a happy world to bring children into. Be generous ! Be kind to me ! I must have good will– everybody's . . .

André (Burying his face in his hands) You don't know him !

Alice He is your father. Our child will be his grandchild . . . (in final appeal) It might be to-night . . .

Gaston (Harshly, without stirring) Take her away !

(SHE recoils.)

André (Moving to support her) Pity him !—poor fanatic !

Alice (Holding to him) André . . . To forget—*forget !*

André (Vehemently) God could not forget !

Alice (Her mind groping) God wouldn't hear. He hears only . . . harmony. It came to me—just—now —sitting at the piano . . . Take me back . . . where I may find Him.

(HE leads HER out.

GASTON's face shows a momentary gleam

of triumph at the thought of their discomfiture. The next moment he makes the discovery that he cannot move.

HE stifles an impulse to call out. His features begin to work convulsively.

Suddenly the serene strains of the Rondo to the *Pathétique* are heard tentatively from the piano in the adjoining room.

His whole frame stiffens in frenzied protest, then gradually relaxes, as his head falls forward. . . .

Darkness descends on the SCENE.

The touch at the piano gains in assurance, and now the message of the Rondo begins to assert itself.

* * *

A hush falls, as though a Presence had intervened, and we are not unprepared for the SPIRITUAL VOICE that presently emerges.)

The Spirit Gaston.

Gaston Am I dead ?

The Spirit You may see what was your body.

Gaston So there is afterlife ?

The Spirit There is life.

Gaston I did not know. Am I to be punished for it ? Were they right, the priests ? Is there Heaven and Hell ?

The Spirit Not punishment. Life grows.

Gaston Re-birth ?

The Spirit For you.

Gaston This world ?—this Earth ?

The Spirit For you.

Gaston I want no better. I am ready. Yet—I shall not remember ? It will not be the same ?

The Spirit Something you will remember. Me deep down you will remember. But you will not know it.

Gaston My friends ?

The Spirit You will make new friends.

Gaston Paris will still be Paris !

The Spirit You will not see Paris.

Gaston What ? (A sudden terror) Is all haphazard ?

The Spirit (Pityingly) How should you perceive the design. Who cannot yet discern our frontiers ?

Gaston (Faintly) Where am I to be born ? What parentage . . . ?

The Spirit Your mother is a harlot in the Rhineland.

(A silence.
The Music swells a little . . .
Then another VOICE—the VOICE of OTTO—is translated.)

Otto Where are you bringing me ? Rosa, Rosa ! The child !
To have failed you at the last !

The Spirit Your watch was ended.

Otto The child ! No one to care !

The Spirit Life's child. Life cares.

Otto Oh, I am torn and bleeding.

The Spirit Comfort awaits.

Otto Where ?

The Spirit In a Mother's heart.

Otto To be born anew
Into that jungle ? No ! In pity, no !

The Spirit Fear not. You shall have rest.

(The Music grows louder.)

Otto What do I hear ?

The Voice of Alice (Through the music) Oh my love ! My little one !
Are you coming near ?
I will cherish you ! I will make you happy !

Otto (With a cry) I come . . .

(The Rondo pursues its tranquil course, as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

A TRILOGY—JEHOVAH.

HIS eyes are bloodshot from the dazzling void
Of silent oceans by whose edge he lies:
He broods, and old creations are destroyed,
He broods, and new creations crystallize.

He has no joy in all that he uprears,—
His soul is racked with endless discontent:
Seethings of vapour are congealed to spheres,
And icy orbs in shapeless flux ferment.

With planless skill he kneads a knoll of clay,
Moistened with planet-dew, and flings it down.
Ages of tragic glory ebb away,
When in a flash he damns them with a frown.

His heavy incantation weaves the spell
That fashions stars, whose orbits he ordains,
Fettering generations in a cell,
Uniting man to man with living chains.

His eyes are bloodshot from the dazzling void,
His dusk is swiftly lulling him to rest,
The while he dreams, his worlds shall be destroyed,
And on the morrow he renews his quest.

PIANISSIMO.

AFTER the storm the coverlet of the skies
Is littered with wreckage, like a banquet-hall
After a savage feast that ended in brawl,
In spilling of wine and blood, and in stifled cries.

The corpse of the night begins to smoulder, clenched
By the slow livid fires of the waxing day
Which turn the flames in the street lamps to thin and grey
Jets of eerie lustre, doomed to be quenched.

The city is heavy with dreams, is bare and still,
Yet is itself a dream to the gaze of one
Who never would wake again, if bliss could kill.
Perchance the fruit of what in this night was done
Shall, in due season, pace, even as here I pace,
And shape a sonnet to a woman's face.

MUSIC HALL.

BETWEEN the painted dome and the darkened pit
Whence van-boys, tallymen and racing touts
Belch whiffy gold-flake fumes from mouths and snouts,
Three slanting jets of limelight dart and flit

In polychromes that blend and intertwine
To focus on the massive pectoral spheres,
The flanks and crupper of a senile peer's
Sleek, steatopygous, lush concubine.

She smirks and struts across the creaking boards,
Encased in the tightest of tights. As she entones
An aria with her fruity vocal chords,
Which silence brass that brays, cat-gut that groans,
Eyes of a thousand males gloat with delight,
Eyes of a thousand females glare with spite.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH: BANK HOLIDAY.

VACUOUSLY round and round with staring eyes,
Hardpainted,
Wooden horses move in never-ending circles ;
Vacuously up and down with rigid forelegs,
Rigid hindlegs, rigid painted wooden bodies,
Up and down transfixed on fluted brasses.
Ragtime tears across their rhythmic prancing ;
Shrieks,
Shrills,
And wavers down into their rhythm.
The painted wooden horses spin in circles,
Motion semblant.
And about them :
Vacuously round and round with staring eyes,
Crowds moving.
And beyond them : Times, seasons, kingdoms, empires,
suns and planets, systems, institutions,
spin in endless cycle, motion semblant.
Maybe beyond
The everlasting gods move round and round,
vacuously up and down with staring eyeballs :
Transfixed eternities.

THE LAODICEANS.

PUT out the eternal fires now, drain the lake
Of brimstone, batten down the trap-doors all!
Put dust-sheets on the harps, hang up the robes,
Shut fast the gates of pearl! . . . And let there be
A middle kingdom, realm of half-and-half,
Of neutral shades and mediocrity,
Where nothing is nor wholly is not, dun
And non-committal, twilit 'twixt-and-'tween!
For gone is all the ancient gusto; now
No more do "saint and sinner," "good and bad,"
Sound on our lips distinct as "white and black";
No more do we unwavering draw the line
Betwixt the sheep and goats: ourselves not quite
Beatifiable nor damnable—
Queer mixture, capable of vilest crimes
Or noblest heroisms, protean,
Whose left hand knows not what our right hand does.
The strain is mixed (endogamy of each sort—
Sinners and saints—not having been maintained),
And we are all a wretched mongrel breed!
Now—worse confusion—relativity
Unsettling even science, spreads abroad
Insidious anarchy. Now Dogma flies
From doubting bishops to strange scientists
Who seem like mystics, and then back again,
And nowhere finds a home. There's nothing sure
The wicked compromise and bend the knee
To God; the good repent their piety;
And all are doubtful and observe the mean.
Ring down the safety-curtain on Hell's scene!
Let there be no more sulphur, no more fire!
Silence your voices, O celestial choir!
And let Jehovah cease from blessing as from ire.

EUROPEAN ANTHOLOGY

I.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.

LUDWIG RUBINER.

AUGUST STRINDBERG.

OTAKAR BREZINA.

GUSTAV KRKLEC.

EUROPEAN ANTHOLOGY.—I.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.

THIRD CHANGE OF SKIN

(*From the German*).

MY skin bids fair to warp and shred ;
With zest that new returns.
For earth,—though much on earth it fed—
The serpent in me yearns.

'Twixt stone and grass on crooked way
Now crawl I hungrily,
To eat what I have eaten aye,
Thee, serpent-food, earth, thee !

LUDWIG RUBINER.

THE DANCER NIJINSKI

(*From the German*).

MY space is like a slanting blue wire for which I grope.
Up ! From this dingy orb of lamp-bulbs let me away.
And everywhere the smell of ancient plush and harlots' soap.
Afar pale chains of foreheads in the dark aquarium sway.

Up ! Glassy rungs of air. My arms are thin. My toes
I squeeze together. Green lamps, cuffs, fiddle-bows now have waned.
Above me the hair of my stupid periwig, red and unreachable flows.
Lift hands ! Breathers scream in the dark. It is my air you have drained !

I sink. To your warm dens, lewd curs, shall I enter in!
Carpets, planks, twine you like long worms! In your midst
I cease to rise.
Hostile cavities of the boxes, in a dimly whirling gulf you
shall spin.
Drown in the distance, you sleepy lights on the over-lofty
flies.

My fists twirl. Somewhere you sit. Your brains will spurt.
Palely through gloom and lamplight, apes upon trembling
boughs you flit.
In a circle you fly afar from me. I tiptoe hoveringly alert.
The stillness revolves like bowls of skyey whiteness. Light!
Yonder, beings on beings pallidly, mutely sit.

AUGUST STRINDBERG.

SINGERS!

(*From the Swedish*).

Singers!
HOW long will you keep on warbling lullabies
And brandishing rattles for pastime of children?
Why do you still offer bottles and comforters?
Do you not see the sweet milk is untouched,
And the baby is teething?

Singers!
How long will you keep on frightening children
With bogies bolstered in worm-eaten tatters?
Gather up the rusty armour and weapons
And send them off for a final display
In the Nordisk Museum!

Singers!
Why do you mourn just the ideal which proved false?
Every age has its notions of things and affairs:
And we have our ideas of reality!
You remain faithful to your own ideas!
We shall not desert ours.

Singers !
Why do you sing only in sublime tones of the sublime ?
The sublime, that life gives, for us is the sublimest.
Why do you still foist off the feigned fairness for the true ?
The true is evil, as long as fairness is feigning,
The evil is truth !

Singers !
Have done with pining serenades in the moonlight !
Though in the window a light is still burning,
The ideal has tucked itself between warm sheets,
She begins to grow ancient, the ancient beauty,
And dotes on her slumbers !

Singers !
If the night air has not cracked your fine voices,
And if you desire to learn your new songs,
Very well, leave the ancient beauty to her slumbers !
We shall join together in a song for the new day :
The sun has arisen !

OTAKAR BREZINA.

Ó MOURNFUL GRAVEYARD

(*From the Czech*).

O MOURNFUL graveyard, where souls of the mighty dream,
And throngs of glistening shades pass age-long to the tomb,
Glowings of mystic fires, like to a polar gleam,
Upon thy portals loom.

Sleeping, I near thy radiance 'mid my garden-close,
Where night has flooded, like a darksome ocean-bay,
A field of perished flowers, which phosphor-livid glows
In lustre's blue array.

Trembling of silenced words, quenched passions' misty veil
Time with grey woof has spanned amid thy mute despair ;
Deep sighs of perished throngs across thy seed-plots trail
And moulder in thine air.

Beneath a vault aloof, upon a tiny shrine,
Where o'er a marble city towers thy metal fane,
Eternal One, durst I, marred with blood-lusts of mine,
My mass for Thee ordain ?

And soak the bread of life in wine of rapture, on
The altar-table, which conceals in hallowed stead
'Neath roses of my dreams and lights of orison
The relics of thy dead ?

Or will thy body yield marvel of blood, perchance,
Vine-like, in golden goblet, heavy for my weak hands,
And with angelic lustre wilt thou light my glance,
Born amid twilight lands ?

Upon my pyre of days I bid Thee : Torture, burn,
In sorrow, prison-house blanch Thou my face as snow
Grief to Thy fragrant incense-glory will I turn
'Mid song-craft's pulsing glow.

And foam of ecstasy, as gleaming flowers unfolded,
Flung by love's ferment, I on dark-tinged floors shall heap,
With bliss of maiden forms, where perfumes, bosom-moulded,
'Mid alabaster sleep.

In glowing pillar's guise my soul shall skywards grasp,
And coffined in my strength, sleeping I shall abide,
Till as a smitten priest, I in the secret's clasp
Kneel at Thine altar's side.

GUSTAV KRKLEC.

THE CITY

(*From the Croatian*).

I.

THE City is a green spider,
The lord of houses, churches, streets, people,
Young girls, children and pregnant women,
Factories, barracks, hospitals, institutes,
Workmen who are gloomy with hard toil,
Girls who sell their blissful bodies,
Poets who eternally brood and forebode,
And hands which are fresh as spring-time roses,
And those which clutch at their red weals,
And those which eternally fondle soft silk.

It escorts hapless girls to a deep pit,
Slays children in the wombs of pregnant women;
To murderers it proffers knives, keen daggers,
And the red blood in sound bodies it poisons
With venom of swollen veins.

Over all its magical net hovers,
And with thin threads binds
Summits of towers,
Roofs of houses
And people . . .

II.

The City is a green spider.
Eternally it spins, spins and spins :
Eternally it weaves, weaves and weaves,
And twists thin threads into black nets,
And lies in wait.

I know that the houses and the beautiful women,
And the yellow streets, the roads, highways, cafés,
And flowers, books, apparel, golden rings,
Liqueurs, drunken nights, Cyprus wines,
Coachmen, automobiles,
Are all its devices wherewith it allures me
Into the magical net
And the dream . . .

III.

The City is a green spider :
It thirsts for my red blood and child-like flesh,
It quivers utterly for my guiltless body,
It trembles . . .

Two evil green desires burn in its eyes,
Two evil green smiles
Eternally creep after me
And eternally follow
My every footstep.

Behind my traces it creeps like a thief in the night,
Like a passionate hunter after the fresh spoor of an animal
In the snowy morning.

All its hands shriek and burn for me,
All its eyes soar after my footsteps :
It thirsts like an animal in the wilderness,
And lies in wait.

IV.

The City is a green spider.
I flee from it upon long and dark ways,
I flee weeping and screaming like a child,
And seize at every straw
If the deep eddy threatens me.

I flee from it in vain like a weak child,
I scream in vain :
Eternally it is with me, and eternally it waits and waits,
Once more, the last time.

I flee from it and carry my devout heart.

Behind me laugh the houses, black mockeries,
Behind me laugh the streets, crawling snakes,
And glassy eyes of telephone pillars,
Towers,
Roofs,
People.

Death.

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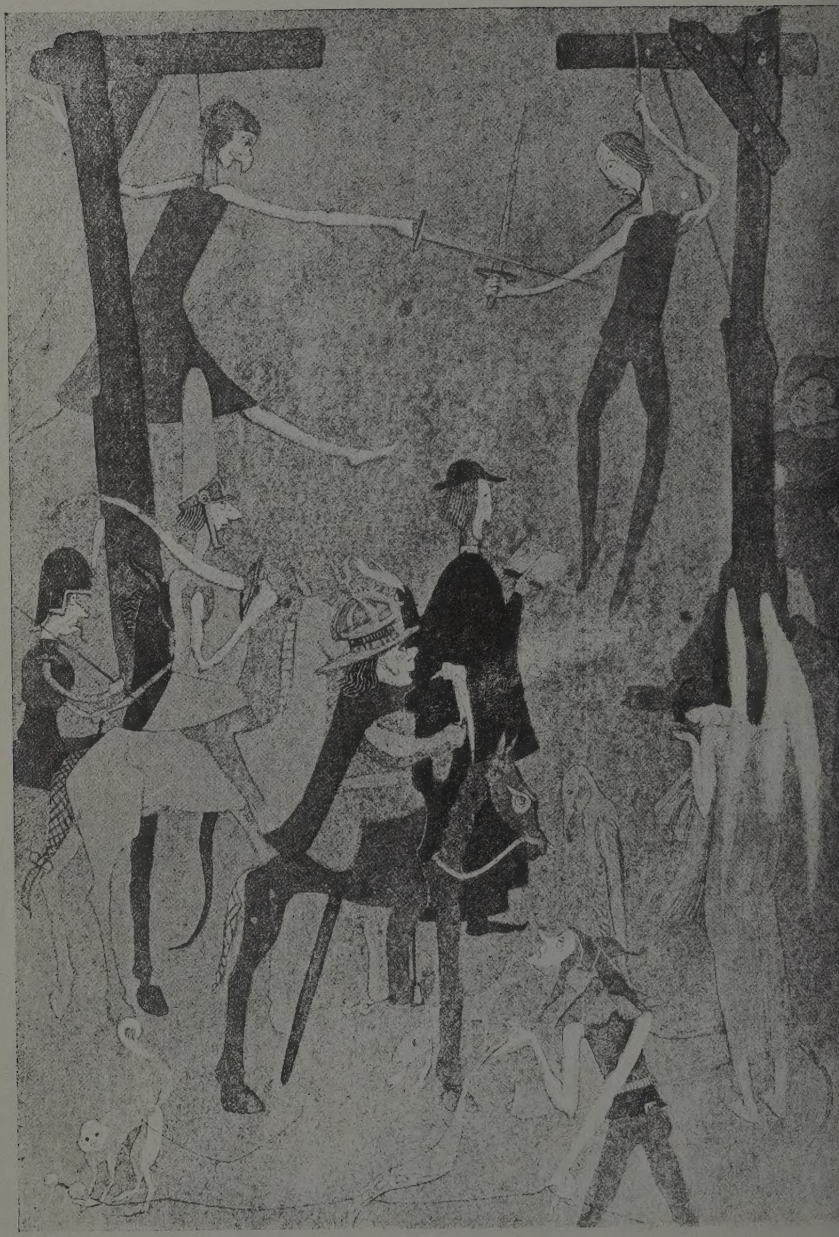

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